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General Anthony Wayne

The
Neutral Ground

BY
Belle Willey Gue



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To
GENERAL ANTHONY WAYNE
*who daringly, gallantly and enthusiastically
assisted in establishing American
independence*

202433

PLOT

EVERGREEN HILL is the home of Mr. Ward who, with his family has resided there for many years; this estate which covers considerable ground, is located near the Hudson River a few miles back of, and a little beyond Stony Point upon a slight elevation of land; entirely surrounding the estate at regular intervals, evergreen trees are growing luxuriantly, while in front of the residence itself are some splendid specimens of non-deciduous, constantly green, forest giants; among these towering trees several widely branching, long-needled pines and gracefully drooping sturdy Norway spruce, are noticeable; the commodious dwelling occupied by the owner and his immediate family, has several wide, two-storied porches which like the house itself are painted white; the many, small-paned, irregularly shaped windows both upstairs and down, are furnished with heavy, wooden blinds provided with slats so arranged that they can be opened or closed at will; these blinds or shutters are covered with a peculiar, dark-green paint that corresponds to, and beautifully blends with the foliage of the evergreen trees; a wide sweeping driveway winds through the grounds that are contiguous to the residence, and connects them with the public highway which is at

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some little distance from the house; a great variety of barns, sheds, granaries, corn-cribs and many other out-buildings are scattered here and there through the grounds while at one side of and near to the house is a little row of white-washed cottages in which, the servants who are employed about the place make their homes.

Soon after the Declaration of Independence, there were in the United States of America, two distinct classes of people; one of these classes upheld, assisted, and adored George Washington and the other endeavored whether openly or in secret, to harass, circumvent and interfere with the plans of the justly great and sublimely powerful leader who laid the foundation of our republic, and unfurled that bright banner, that never has been and must never be vanquished; both of these classes were strongly represented within the household of the owner of Evergreen Hill, and while the contentions of the opposing parties never amounted to actual warfare, yet they did not fall far short of that lamentable condition. Patriotic is almost, if not quite as fierce and unreasonable as religious intolerance; it seems to be as easy and natural for one human being to condemn in another the absence of certain pronounced sentiments that are possessed by himself, as it is for him to condone and attempt to justify his own faults.

Mr. Ward is living quietly and in comparative seclusion with his two daughters Susan and Mary,

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very near to, and yet to a great extent apart from the stirring scenes that marked the beginning of the independent life of the United States of America; the sisters, very nearly of the same age as far as mortal life is concerned, having had the same advantages as to wealth, education and refinement, differ very greatly both in appearance and general views of life; they have just reached the romantic, idealistic, inspirational period of early womanhood, and are ably and systematically chaperoned by the self-assertive, absolutely certain, somewhat domineering, personality of the widow of Mr. Ward's brother; Catharine Ward expresses her own emphatic beliefs regarding any matters openly and without fear or favor in season and out of season, sneeringly denominating the habitual caution that characterizes the actions of her brother-in-law as practically amounting to cowardice and yet, at the same time making it plain that she would be willing without changing her name, to assume a position in the family at Evergreen Hill quite different than the one that she is now occupying.

Just at twilight one day in the late summer of 1778, a handsome young man, mounted on a powerful and spirited roan-colored horse, rode slowly, as if reconnoitering, up the driveway of Evergreen Hill; as horse and rider reached the top of the hill up which the driveway led, they suddenly encountered a formidable obstacle to their further progress; sitting placidly and abstractedly, as if awaiting his

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approach just where the driveway turned sharply to the left, the young soldier for such his uniform proclaimed him to be, was surprised to see a beautiful girl who archly and eagerly, began to ply him with questions concerning the condition of the affairs of the new republic to which she enthusiastically and frankly declared her allegiance; this chance meeting developed into a warm friendship which from time to time, bade fair to break over the bounds that had been set for it, and grow to be a more exalted sentiment. It is only after the re-taking of the fortress of Stony Point by General Anthony Wayne, that Susan Ward discovers the true identity of the young man whose acquaintance she thus accidentally makes.

The pronounced Americanism of the elder sister is not exceeded, but is nearly equalled, by that of the younger daughter of Mr. Ward; Mary however, unlike Susan, who represents herself as being "heart whole and fancy free" has been from her childhood the sweetheart of James Fenimore who, in the very beginning of the war for American independence has joined his fortunes with those of the intrepid handful of hardy pioneers who bravely fought for freedom and the right. The two girls being near to some of the most thrilling conflicts of our revolutionary struggle, make many daring ventures and have many narrow escapes from dire disaster some of the latter being due to their own ingenuity, quickness of wit, and courageous decision but often brought about by the personal interference of those who have their

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interest at heart, even though these individuals may be, and in some instances are, unknown to them; one of these through association and the necessities of his environment, is never able to reveal his true identity to them but nevertheless listens more than once to their acknowledgment of the efficiency of his powerful protection.

Mr. Ward has a friend who seldom appears in his home, but who is treated with great respect on the occasions of his infrequent visits; this man evidently exerts great influence, not only over the owner of Evergreen Hill, but also over almost his entire household, the chief exception to this general rule being the younger daughter of the family, who is upheld and strengthened in the decided stand that she takes in this particular by her young and ardent lover, who is an enthusiastic admirer of, and a faithful adherent to the principles that are promulgated by the Commander-in-chief of the American armies; a flutter of excitement spreads itself, until it reaches into almost every nook and cranny of the holdings of Mr. Ward upon the arrival of this important personage. Interest and activity are maintained at high tension during the time of his stay, and a deep though silent sigh as if of involuntary relief is breathed immediately after his departure; Catharine Ward shares in, and is indeed to a great extent the instigator of the pronounced and potent changes that are the direct result of the effect that this mysterious, and as it appears, masquerading indi-

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vidual has upon his host and through him upon those with whom he is closely associated.

Storm Cloud, Evening Breeze, and Moonless Night, are among the friendly Indians who, through their knowledge of the country, and natural ability as spies render efficient and timely aid to those whose interests they desire to further.

Aunt Dolly is a negro woman who has been in the family of Mr. Ward since his own infancy and is about his own age; although she is married to Uncle Obediah and has a goodly number of children, she looks upon Susan and Mary Ward with an affectionate and motherly interest and seconds them in many comparatively innocent but decidedly surreptitious escapades; neither Aunt Dolly nor Uncle Obediah have very pronounced opinions concerning the questions of the day, but one of them leans very plainly one way and one the other, politically speaking.

While the fate of the young republic still hung in the balance, and the fortunes of war favored alternately one side and then the other of the contending parties, there were many who did not wish to take an unequivocal stand either with Great Britain or with the United States of America, hoping and indeed intending, to be upon the winning side at the final wind-up; these parties tried to maintain in public at least an impartial attitude toward the combatants, believing that it would be possible for them to declare themselves as having in reality been all along in favor of the stronger of the two, when it should

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at last be settled as to which one that was in time to receive the emoluments and curry the favors that would be the rewards of their supposed fealty.

The first few years immediately following the declaration of the independence of the United States, were storm-tossed and heart-breaking ones for George Washington and those who followed after him; those who were nearest to him, who carved out for us and for our posterity the liberty that is our priceless and best-beloved boon, knew how heavy was the burden of doubt and at times, almost of despair that was laid upon him; part of this burden was due to the fact that many who would eventually reap great and lasting benefits from his heroic endeavors, were not willing to unselfishly cast their all into the fiery crucible where even then the pure gold of their future was being refined, but preferred to remain as far as possible outside of the danger zone with their feet firmly planted on what was known as The Neutral Ground.

Those, who, as American citizens are occupying today the territory that was once considered to be a part of the British Empire, and enjoying the wonderful privileges and magical modern improvements of the twentieth century, are well aware of the fact that no flag, except the one representing the Creator of all worlds, can be permitted to be placed above our glorious stars and stripes and allowed to float beneath the sky in *that one fair land, whose single boast has always been that it was free.*

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH automobiles have now very generally taken the places that were formerly filled by horses and carriages, although electric lights and torches are now widely used instead of tallow dips and lard-lanterns, although telephone, telegraph and wireless communication between human beings who are at a distance from each other is now not at all unusual, although all these modern improvements and many others besides are quite commonly enjoyed by the people of the United States of America, yet the hearts that are throbbing in their bosoms like the blood that is flowing in their veins are warm and strong and pulsing, vibrant with life and quick to answer to the demands of emotion and of principle.

There is inherent in the nature of every true American, a love that is almost reverential and a feeling of gratitude that is genuine and dominant for George Washington and those who were closely associated with him, when the fate of our proud and indomitable nation hung in the balance, when the question not only of our independence, but even of our existence as a separate nation among the other nations of the earth was as yet undecided.

To wander with our brave forefathers in imagination through the wilderness, to bear with

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them the hardships, and to feel the thrill of the adventures that they met, to joy with them and sorrow with them, to suffer with them in their disappointments and to be uplifted by their victories, must be looked upon by us who are now profiting by their self-sacrifice and by their profound devotion to what they thought was right as an inspiration and an education and an almost holy privilege.

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General Anthony Wayne

CHAPTER I

THE SUMMER night was softly descending upon the hills that rose in silent majesty at some little distance back from the banks of the Hudson River.

Many of the leafy giants that had but recently helped to form the primeval forest had been chopped down, and with their branches rudely lopped off, laid side by side upon the ground from which the stumps and underbrush had been removed, so that after having been thickly covered with earth, whereby the chinks between the logs were fairly well filled, they formed a rough but serviceable corduroy road; this winding way led in and out among the elevations of land following the level stretches and the slight declivities rather than the more abrupt ascents and descents that constantly presented themselves; on account of the heavy rains almost amounting in some seasons to torrential down-pours as well as the wind-blown drifting masses of fleecy snow that piled themselves upon and among the trees, this primitive

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public highway had to be frequently reinforced and repaired; but in spite of the attention that it received from those who enjoyed its advantages, it was at its best but a poor substitute for, or to be exact forerunner of the magnificent and dignified thoroughfare over which the traveler now approaches the outskirts of the city of New York.

The year seventeen hundred and seventy-eight was in many ways a stormy and a pivotal one for the independent strength of a nation then in its uncertain infancy that is now invincible; at the close of the preceding year, the fortunes of the young United States of America were almost at their lowest ebb; the great, unselfish heart of Washington was rent and torn by many conflicting emotions; in his plain, and even dingy headquarters at Valley Forge, he spent many weary hours during which, doubtful and despairing thoughts weighed down his proud, devoted and courageous spirit; but while he was deserted by many who were occupying high places of authority and trust, while he was criticised and even in some instances condemned by those who chose to attribute his actions to other motives than the ones that really were be-

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neath and in control of them, his armies were always enthusiastically loyal to him, and the great majority of the people recognized in him the only one who was capable of leading them and their posterity on into the full enjoyment of life, liberty, and happiness.

It was in February of seventeen hundred and seventy-eight that Benjamin Franklin, acting for the United States of America, made the first treaty of the young republic with a foreign nation; at the gay, splendid and sometimes supercilious court of Louis XVI., the genial, witty, experienced, elderly patient and persevering American doctor won his way against all odds and secured the powerful aid of France for his struggling and well-beloved country.

It was in June of the same year that the British army evacuated Philadelphia thus leaving the patriots free to enter and occupy that important city.

In the following month occurred one of the darkest blots that has ever stained the pages of so-called civilized warfare; in the peaceful valley of Wyoming, Pennsylvania dwelt many patriotic families; almost all of the men who were able to carry and make use of deadly

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weapons, were away from home engaged in active service; Major John Butler commanding sixteen hundred loyalists, Canadians and Indians entered this valley, and after defeating the handful of incompetents who opposed him offered honorable terms of surrender to the occupants of the fort to which the settlers had fled for safety; in consideration of this offer, the garrison capitulated; then, in open violation of the promises that had been made, the gates of the fort were thrown open to the barbarians, who without regard to age or sex, maltreated and massacred all of those whom they found within its walls.

During this year, those who passed along the public highway already partially described did so at considerable personal risk; many dangers both for man and beast were lurking in the forest and behind the hills that bordered it; it was very evident that the eager and alert young man, who, mounted upon a powerful and spirited charger was traversing cautiously, and yet daringly the corduroy road, was well aware that enemies of various kinds, made so on account of many different reasons, might be hidden by the shadows that were surrounding him upon all

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sides, for from time to time he peered anxiously ahead of him, and constantly glanced hurriedly but not carelessly upon both sides of the course that he was pursuing; as he reached the top of a little rise of ground, he suddenly picked up the reins that had been lying rather loosely upon the neck of his horse and in a low tone of voice with a word either of command or appeal to the intelligent animal, backed him off the road as silently as possible; here he waited quietly, with one hand laid soothingly upon his mount's heavy mane until the object that had startled him had passed the spot into which he had retreated; had there been sufficient light, an observer would have noticed the half-derisive smile that was playing around his handsome mouth, as he almost immediately came out into the road again.

“Well Roan,” he said, leaning forward as if to speak directly into the ear of the creature he was addressing, “if this keeps on I’ll get to be afraid of my own shadow! That fellow who just went by was almost thin enough to be somebody’s shadow, and as for the beast that he bestrode, ’twas never meant for rapid riding.

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You could out-distance such a mount as that at a walk!"

Soon after that the horse emphatically began to move his ears, pointing them sharply forward, and then almost instantly laying them back so that they nearly touched his head; from this action on the part of his equine friend, the young man knew, although neither his own instinct nor intelligence had apprised him of the fact, that they were then in the immediate vicinity of an improved tract of ground and probably of other creatures like themselves.

Although the twilight was fast deepening into darkness, making it more and more difficult to definitely distinguish objects that were not close at hand, the rider, peering cautiously ahead, was soon able to make out at some little distance in advance and toward the left, two tall stone pillars or buttresses that appeared to be a pair of massive gate-posts; slowly approaching these evidences of the handiwork of man, he found that the heavy gate had been left invitingly open, and as no one seemed to be near enough to bar his progress, he boldly guided his horse into the broad driveway that as he then discovered, led through spacious and well-cared-for

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grounds; as he advanced, he became conscious of a lavish display of both wealth and refinement, and soon saw that he was drawing near to an imposing residence, the white surface of which, dotted here and there with what were evidently darker window-blinds, gleamed forth through the dusk as if extending to him a silent but a gracious welcome; as horse and rider topped a small hill up which the driveway led they saw that the latter turned sharply to the left, and that just where it turned, a rustic seat had been conveniently placed; upon this seat they could descry a slight figure clothed voluminously in white; this unexpected encounter surprised them both so much that with one accord they stopped and stood quietly beside the rustic seat, looking down upon the one who for a vibrant moment sat there as silent as they were looking up at them.

She who looked up saw to begin with a noble high-lifed horse, and in the army saddle that was on his back she beheld a man who was apparently about thirty years of age, and judging from the uniform that he wore was an officer devoted to the patriotic cause; he was a handsome fellow, slender and of good height,

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with a clear complexion and cheeks that under excitement became suddenly as rosy as those of a blushing girl; he had a heavy mop of jet-black, waving hair which, as he removed his three-cornered hat, was shown to have been powdered in accordance with a custom of the day; his large, full, shining and expressive dark-brown eyes were gazing calmly down into her startled blue ones with open admiration and surprised delight; his small pouting red mouth was wreathed in innocent and boyish smiles; he had a high, smooth, sloping forehead, a straight and well-shaped nose and a chin that denoted determination and yet was not pronouncedly firm enough to be aggressive; after a rather minute but very hasty inspection of the traveler's general appearance, the girl arose and stepping forward so that she was even a little nearer to the powerful charger than she had been before, anxiously inquired:

“What good news do you bring, Sir, as to the fortunes of our gallant army?” she stretched out her steady soft right hand then, and laid it gently on the mane of the horse who had been plainly begging her to notice him, for there was depicted on his broad, intelligent face

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an expression of pleased protecting and benevolent regard, "Are we constantly advancing toward the victory that in the end as I believe is sure to crown our efforts?"

As she spoke, her countenance was lighted up by a fine enthusiasm that added greatly to her natural attractive comeliness; her fair and youthful features were set off as if by an artistic and a most becoming frame, by fluffy masses of light brown, almost golden hair that as if rebellious under restraint, had partially escaped from the high and prim conventional coiffure in the then accepted form of which its owner had endeavored to confine it; the dew of evening but emphasized the natural kinkiness of the truant curls that were now closely clustered all about her broad white brow; the young soldier who had dismounted, and hat in hand, was bowing low before her, was fully conscious of all these comparatively unimportant matters, and they may have had some influence on the next move that he made; the horse had been retaining the little hand that had been placed upon his mane as if he felt that somehow it belonged to him, but when his comrade slipped his own strong hand beneath it, he relinquished

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it without a murmur, and stood sponsor as it were to the courteous civilities that were then exchanged between its owner and the girl, who, as it seemed although unconsciously had been waiting for his coming:

“That we will eventually win a righteous victory in the unequal conflict in which as I am very glad to know you also are engaged, I do not doubt; such eager, buoyant spirits as your own” he declared, pressing his lips lightly upon the palm of the hand that he then quietly released, “would help to win an almost hopeless cause. But” he ended, looking down at her smilingly and ingratiatingly, “perhaps you will be kind enough to enlighten my ignorance by letting me know where I am, and whom I have the honor to address. I” he added, after a moment’s hesitation as if communing with himself, “am Courtney Monahan, very much at your service.”

“You are now” she stated simply, “at Evergreen Hill my father’s country-place; I am his elder daughter, Susan Ward, spinster, and you” she ended, archly yet modestly and hospitably, “are very welcome.”

CHAPTER II

THAT evening, before a cheery fire that was merrily blazing in the large fire-place that almost filled one entire end of the spacious parlor generally occupied by the family at Evergreen Hill, the young stranger found that the girl who had seemed to him to be very attractive and interesting, as he had already seen her in the semi-darkness, was even more so in the brilliant light of the fire combined with the soft luster that was shed by several tallow-dips that had been placed here and there through the room.

Although Mr. Ward treated his guest with great respect, it could be seen that he felt uneasy in his presence; the nervous symptoms that accompanied this feeling, grew more and more pronounced as the evening advanced until at last he turned to him and said:

“Did you encounter anyone on the road to-night?” then without waiting for an answer to the question he had asked as if he did not wish

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to appear to be too curious concerning the information that he sought, he added, "In these dangerous times one who is responsible for the safety of those who are dear to him" glancing tenderly at his two daughters who with his brother's widow, Mrs. Catharine Ward were seated near to them diligently engaged in needlework, "can not know too much regarding what goes on around him."

"I can not say that I encountered anyone" the young man laughingly replied, "for as you say the times are dangerous, and if I possibly can do so, I avoid coming in contact with anyone when I am out on the road at night."

"Well then" his host inquired as if determined to unearth any knowledge that would serve his purpose, "did you meet or were you passed by any living thing as you approached my home?"

"I think it was alive!" the visitor exclaimed rising nimbly and taking a position with his back to the fire so that he faced his interlocutor, "I'm not sure though whether it was really a living man or just the ghost of one." Regarding Mr. Ward smilingly and quizzically, "However" he ended reassuringly, "I do not

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think that it was harmful; it seemed to me to be too anaemic and indeterminate for that."

"Was he mounted?" the older man asked eagerly, "And was he alone?"

"It does not seem to me that he was mounted," the guest replied watching with evident curiosity the face of his questioner meanwhile, "and yet I am certain that he was not walking. He appeared to be without a companion unless the sorry beast that carried him could be considered to be so."

Mr. Ward then as if completely satisfied, changed the subject of conversation to one of more general interest, and after a few moments during which the only noise that was heard in the room was the snapping of the burning wood in the fire-place remarked:

"Now that we are on such friendly terms with France perhaps we shall soon be following the customs of that country rather than those of England as we have formerly done."

"Well, I hope not!" declared Mrs. Ward decidedly, jerking her needle through the cloth upon which she was sewing and while she held the unoffending bit of steel out at arm's length, biting off viciously the thread that was attached

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to it, "I think myself that it would be well for us all to follow the customs of England more closely, and not be trying to establish new ideas and upset everything that has already been done!"

"Why Aunt Catharine!" exclaimed Mary Ward leaning over and playfully patting her relative's hand, "You wouldn't want us to be colonies of England again would you?"

The younger sister resembled, and yet was very different in many ways than the older daughter of Mr. Ward; the two girls were alike in that they both possessed a certain poised, and yet not proud elegance of manner, evidences of natural and acquired refinement and the qualities that are essential to the maintenance of a firm adherence to what is believed to be right; as Mary spoke, the visitor observed that in her voice there was the same penetrating, but not cloying sweetness that had delighted him earlier in the evening, as he listened to the words that had been addressed to him by the young woman whom he had found upon the rustic seat; the younger sister however, was taller than the elder by several inches, and her added height, coupled with the slenderness of

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her youthful figure, gave her an appearance of dignity that might, joined with corresponding characteristics, have amounted to haughtiness; but her dark gray eyes held in their unfathomed depths, an expression that belied the presence in her nature of opinionated pride; this expression was that of a kindly consideration for, and a recognition of the rights of everything that lived, moved, and had its being even though so far away from her that she could not know the conditions surrounding it; there was also a certain innocent, hidden humor, a sort of childish playfulness that dwelt deep down within her eyes, but this peculiarity of hers was known only to those with whom she was upon terms of intimacy, and was displayed even then only at rare intervals; her manner of dress was simpler and more reserved than that of her livelier sister, in the arrangement of whose gayer attire she herself spent many pleasant hours; she looked up now admiringly at Susan who, without giving her aunt an opportunity to answer the question that had been addressed to her, declared:

“I for one think it would be very fine to be in direct and easy communication with Paris; they

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make very pretty gowns and arrange artistic head-gears over there.”

As she made this statement, she looked brightly at each member of the little party in turn, not allowing her hasty, almost cursory glance to linger in any instance, and as soon as she ceased speaking, she once more as it seemed, fixed her entire attention upon the hem that she was making on one edge of a long piece of fine linen which was pinned to a stiffly starched white apron just over her knee; from time to time, the pin by which the cloth was attached had to be removed, and after the strip of linen had been moved along replaced as the work advanced; each time that this change of position became necessary, the needle-woman paused briefly, and during one of these pauses, the observant young man had drawn near, picked up the end of the piece of linen that had fallen on the floor, and after having carefully and systematically arranged it so that it made a compact little roll, was holding it delicately and waiting patiently for the fair seamstress to finish hemming a few more inches of cloth; he had been so diligent in his self-assumed position as helper, that the hand holding the roll of

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linen was very close to the pin that attached it to the stiffly starched apron, and when Susan, after having made the remark that has just been recorded included him in her fleeting general glance, she found that she was gazing directly into his magnetic and admiring eyes for in order to properly attend to the roll of cloth that he had taken into his charge, he had considered that it was necessary for him to lean a little toward her; she looked away at once, but what she had already seen somewhat disconcerted her, so much so indeed that when she tried to unpin the cloth, her hand shook, slightly it is true, but yet enough to make her drop the pin; in trying to recover it her very willing and adroit assistant managed the affair so that the search consumed some little time, for a pin upon a bare and highly polished floor can, if properly handled, play quiet a pretty game of hide and seek; after the truant was retrieved, the two young faces were flushed and animated and the two young people felt from that time that they were well acquainted.

Catharine Ward had watched this little by-play keenly and understandingly; she needed no lexicon or philosophical treatise to aid her in

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interpreting its meaning; she herself had once been young, and was, even yet, susceptible to some extent to flattery and admiration, particularly if extended to her by the opposite sex; her espionage of her nieces had, until recently, required very little exertion on her part, but as they bloomed into beautiful and alluring womanhood, she realized that her care of them would have to be redoubled; this was especially true in the case of the elder of the two girls, for Mary's troth had for years been plighted to a youth who had been a playmate of her childhood, and besides, the younger sister was at least, so thought her guardian, of a less volatile and impulsive nature than the older one; she decided now that the incipient flirtation that had been going on, as she herself would have expressed it, under her very nose, had progressed far enough, and consequently, she immediately bestirred herself; moving her chair until it was beside the one in which her niece was sitting, she began to examine minutely the work that Susan had been doing; this placed her practically between the young couple, and compelled the girl's voluntary assistant to give up, not only the position that he had assumed, but also

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the roll of cloth that with admirable tenacity he still held in his hand; having thus at one stroke accomplished her double purpose, which was in the first place to separate the young people, and after that to attract attention to herself, she proceeded calmly and at considerable length to answer the question that Mary had put to her:

“I think that it would be a great deal better for us to be colonies of England again and carry on our lives sanely and in order, than to go traipsing around after every man who takes it into his head to get up a revolution and overthrow the government, so that a body can’t go out into her own back yard to get the evening air without running into some kind of an adventure!” she stopped then and glared around upon her auditors as if expecting someone to take the matter up, but as no one ventured to do so, she continued even more decisively than at first, “I think that all this talk about freedom is perfect nonsense! We had enough of both of them before all this rumpus was kicked up, and we had a good many more good things to eat and drink and wear than we have now! What kind of husbands are you two girls likely to get

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I want to know, with soldiers and wars and revolution and what-not drifting hither and yon? Why in my day" she ended, sending her final broadside where it would have telling effect, " a young girl would not even think of such a thing as meeting a perfect stranger entirely unknown to her or to her family, and accepting him as a friend merely on account of his personal appearance" staring defiantly into the young man's puzzled face, "and whatever he might choose to say of himself!"

During this tirade Susan's countenance had paled and flushed by turns, and when it was finished, she arose and standing before her aunt looked down at her with withering scorn depicted upon her expressive features:

"Aunt Catharine," she said, "if you really feel as your words would lead one to suppose, I wish that you would go right back to England and remain there." Her tones were clear and cold but very emphatic, "I think that you have told me that courtesy and hospitality are typical English traits."

CHAPTER III

SOON AFTER the departure of the young American officer, the family at Evergreen Hill was thrown into a state of great excitement by the report that a French fleet commanded by one of the nobles of France, was about to attack the British forces under Lord Howe then concentrated at New York City; the effect that this report had upon the different members of the family was quite varied; Mr. Ward being nominally as well as actually at the the head of the little group, suffered greatly from trepidation and anxiety, for while his home was at some little distance from the scene of the expected conflict, it was nevertheless near enough to be shaken by the shock of the encounter; he had gained some knowledge through letters as well as verbally, concerning the experiences of those who had lived in a territory contiguous to one that was occupied by large bodies of armed men; he knew there were well-established reasons that would lead him to dread the depredations that might be committed

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by ruthless and perhaps reckless marauders sent out possibly upon necessary foraging expeditions, but bent personally upon acquiring for themselves both material plunder and the satisfaction of their own often base and unworthy desires; he knew too, that dangers of this nature would be greatly augmented in the present instance, by the fact that all of those who were about to be engaged in deadly conflict were foreigners with their homes and loved ones, as well as almost all of their real interests, too far away to be affected at least directly by either their honorable or incriminating conduct; also comparative ignorance both as to probabilities and actual conditions made the position of the lonely little household much more terrifying than it would otherwise have been.

There is no doubt that during the period that we are considering, the horrors of war were greatly increased by the lack of convenient means of transportation, as well as the slow and unsatisfactory facilities that were offered for communication between those who were separated from each other even by a distance of but a few miles; it is difficult for those who have been accustomed all their lives to the enjoyment

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of the advantages to be derived from the use of steam, gasoline and electricity as motor powers and also telegraphic, telephonic, and wireless mediums through which ideas may be interchanged, to fully comprehend the conditions that surrounded, and to some extent isolated, the inmates of Evergreen Hill; they themselves however, were well aware of, and so far as lay in their power prepared to guard against the dangers that threatened them; as soon as the shadows cast by certain ones of the tall evergreen trees that at regular intervals completely surrounded the estate of Mr. Ward had lengthened until they reached or stretched beyond certain particular spots, Uncle Obediah who had been the property of the family of Mr. Ward since his own infancy and was about his own age, carefully closed and securely fastened all the heavy, wooden, dark-green window-blinds or shutters that had been made to fit closely over the outside of all the small-paned, odd-sized windows with which the commodious dwelling had been plentifully supplied; this duty accomplished, the aged negro together with a younger assistant of his own color, lifted and and dropped down upon the frame-work into

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which they had been set, two pairs of substantial but awkward and cumbersome cellar-doors; these were afterward fastened upon the under or inner side by heavy wooden bars that were placed across them, and after having been put into projections on the doors themselves, fitted into slots in the frame-work by which they were supported that had been prepared to receive them; earlier in the afternoon, the spacious barns and out-buildings, together with the living creatures that they sheltered, were made as secure from outside interference as the means at hand combined with the ingenuity of the caretakers would allow; soon after that the head of the house, having ascertained accurately that all of those who had been engaged in various ways during the day about the place were under the roof of the main building which ordinarily was occupied by his own immediate family and their personal attendants, carefully examined all of the outside doors of the dwelling; having made sure that they had not been tampered with in any way, he then with his own hands pulled the latch-strings made of tough and seasoned raw-hide, through the holes that had been made in the thick and rather roughly hewn boards that,

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joined together, formed the doors themselves, so that they hung down limply and harmlessly upon the inside; then he placed heavy bars that had been prepared for that especial purpose across the doors, fitting these into notched projections that had been arranged in the door-frames for their reception; these daily duties had been punctiliously and regularly performed, although an uneventful week had elapsed since the disquieting news had been secretly brought to Evergreen Hill; one evening, just as a brilliant sun was sinking behind the western hills, Aunt Dolly the bustling and capable consort of Uncle Obediah, had with many admonitions, and some well distributed cuffs administered by her quick and ready hands, marshaled her numerous progeny into what was known among them as the big house, and disposed of them in accordance with the explicit instruction of Mrs. Catherine Ward; Aunt Dolly herself had especial privileges, because during the extreme youth of Mr. Ward's daughters, she had acted as their nurse; taking advantage of this fact, the negress with characteristic curiosity, wandered through the wide halls, peering here and there into corners where the light was already beginning to

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grow dim; she had pursued her investigations quite thoroughly, as far as the first floor of the house was concerned, and had begun to climb the stairs that led from the hospitably spacious entrance hall to the second story, when suddenly as if arrested by a powerful hand, she stopped, and with eyes dilated and rolling wildly stared fixedly at a large picture that was hanging on the wall at the head of the stairs in the upper hall; this picture was one with which she was very familiar, for she had looked up at it almost every day for many years; she had often dusted the massive frame that surrounded it, and it was natural for her to look sharply at it to see if it need her housewifely attention; she had never taken very much interest in it as a work of art, but had often admired the brilliant colors that it vividly displayed; she shaded her eyes with one trembling hand and with the other clutched weakly and ineffectually at the bannisters that bordered the stairway; for it seemed to Aunt Dolly that the picture, which up to that time she had always found to be as immovable as its own solid frame, had suddenly disappeared as if it had all at once been totally destroyed or wiped out; this appearance of

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utter blankness had lasted however for only a second or so, and then, looking out of the frame where the picture had so recently been the old negress saw distinctly an eager and excited face with what seemed to her to be a pair of very large protruding eyes that peered anxiously and keenly down the stairs and into the hall from which they led; she was very superstitious, and was immediately convinced that what she saw within the massive picture frame was not made of flesh and blood; this conviction was closely followed by a deep and heartfelt contrition on account of various peccadilloes, of which she had been comparatively unconscious, but which now began to assume mountainous proportions; in view of the condition of mind into which she had been suddenly and unexpectedly plunged, she without further ceremony knelt down and began to mumble rapidly and almost incoherently, a confused medley of what were nevertheless very sincere supplications:

“I knows I’sse wicked,” she confessed, “en I knows I has done wrong, but I is needed bad here now untwell ma chillun’ is grown up.” Her voice broke and ascended into a sort of wavering wailing cry, “I hopes to be forgiben,”

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she went on more cheerfully, backing slowly still upon her knees down the stair, "en I hopes den de ha'ant will go away." She opened one of her eyes, for they had both been tightly closed and cautiously and fearfully looked up, "Salvation's free!" she shouted joyfully for the picture had resumed its customary appearance, "Praise de Lord!" she muttered, scrambling to her feet and hurrying through the hall and into the back part of the house, "He am berry good en kin'!"

Aunt Dolly would have been enlightened, but certainly not reassured, had she caught a glimpse of what was behind the face that she had seen looking out of the emptied picture-frame; the timbers that supported the walls and floors of the large and roomy building that housed the family of Mr. Ward, were set in solid masonry, fashioned rather clumsily, and put together mainly with a view of lasting, rather than to any other qualities; these timbers themselves were huge and ungainly as compared with those that are used in modern dwellings, so that quite a little space was left between them as they laid side by side beneath the floors, and stood perpendicularly between the walls of the nu-

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merous rooms; above the second story there was an immense garret, the ceiling of which was so high, that in many places on account of the unevenness of the roof, an ordinary man could stand erect upon the boards that were scattered here and there over the joists; immediately after the face had appeared above the stairway, an athletic young man with an expression that denoted deep disgust upon his countenance, drew his slender form up into the garret; as soon as he had relieved his arms of the weight of his body which they had been supporting, by clinging to two of the stout timbers while he reconnoitered, he leaned down and hurriedly replaced the picture in the frame from which he had previously arranged to easily remove it; then he carefully listened to the audible result of the experiment that he had just been making, and a smile of satisfaction drove away the frowns that had been disfiguring his naturally amiable features; as he moved cautiously and quietly over the somewhat unreliable floor made by the loose boards, he diligently scattered from a little home-made poke or bag that he had conveniently at hand, some fine dry dust that so closely resembled what had been deposited in the

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garret by years of wind and weather that it almost completely obliterated the evidence that otherwise would have been left behind him by his foot-prints; where there were no boards he stepped lightly from joist to joist, always replacing the dust that he disturbed, until at last he reached a certain corner, and dropping upon his hands and knees, crept into a hidden nook that stretched far back beneath the eaves and was well-concealed by some old tea-chests and an accumulation of worn-out or rejected articles of various kinds that had been piled up until some of them touched the under side of the rough shingles or shakes that formed the roof; here he became at once busily engaged; with the aid of tinder flint and steel, he lighted a bit of rag, one end of which was immersed in grease that was contained in a small battered tin cup and began to study some rude drawings and maps that he spread out one after the other as he examined them upon one end of the board on which he rested.

CHAPTER IV

THAT NIGHT Susan and Mary Ward, each one in her own high four-posted bed, listened tremblingly, even to the sounds that the gentle breezes made as they shook the slats in the shutters that covered the windows of their rooms that were adjacent to each other with a communicating door between them; the two girls before retiring had been relating to each other apprehensively some scraps of conversation that had been overheard through the day; they were both in Susan's room, which as it happened was the first one in the upper hall and was therefore very near to the head of the wide stairway that led down to the front door of the dwelling; Mary had just been explaining to her sister her reasons for believing that they were after all comparatively safe from harm:

“Our own troops,” she had proudly and confidently said, “will undoubtedly guard the approaches to the patriotic homes that are known to be located upon the neutral ground. They have guides” she explicated as if her wisdom in

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military matters exceeded that of the one to whom she was speaking, "who go before the others and clear the way for them; men are selected for this service because of their superior sagacity, and the ease with which they can adjust themselves to unforeseen and perhaps unpleasant circumstances; I heard Father saying today, that he had known some of these guides who had performed most daring deeds and who had experienced many hair-breadth escapes. Besides" she had blushinglly ended, "we can always be sure that James" she spoke the name softly and lovingly, "will do all that is within his power to protect and reassure us."

Just at that moment it had seemed to them that something was moving stealthily overhead; they heard a sort of scraping sound, as if something were rubbing surreptitiously upon the wall of the room that they were in; they listened tensely and eagerly, and Susan leaning forward took her sister's hand in hers protectingly; after a few seconds during which the sound continued, the younger girl arose, and tiptoeing softly to the door that lead into the hall, placed a steel bodkin that happened handily to be laying on a little square stand near to her over the

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latch of it, thus effectually locking it so that it could not be lifted from the outside; then she returned to the chair in which Susan was still sitting, and stood quietly beside it with one hand laid lovingly upon the other's shoulder; they waited for some time, but as everything was still, they had finally resumed the conversation that had been interrupted by the unusual noise:

“We can not be too cautious.” Susan declared, “Aunt Catharine was boasting this afternoon about the cunning and resourcefulness of British spies; she said that many of them in their own country were gentlemen of high repute with courteous manners, and every evidence of having had fine training, who, from love of adventure, and a desire to serve their king, having come among those whom they consider as being uncouth, wild Americans, are willing to incur almost any risks and dare almost any dangers. She even hinted,” the fair narrator hesitatingly admitted, “that Courtney Monahan might be an Englishman masquerading in a patriotic uniform.”

“He made very few statements” Mary reminiscently remarked, “as to his own beliefs

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but he had a frank face and a very honest open expression in his eyes."

"I cannot bear to think" said Susan, "that he was deceiving us and yet" she almost whispered, "he did act strangely when he told me for the first time what his own name was."

All these surmises and reports, coupled with the strange noise that they had heard, added greatly to the mental uneasiness of the two girls who waited wide awake with nerves keyed up, and senses abnormally alert for the dawning of the day that would remove temporarily the fears that are the product of the night's terrifying poignant power; the tall clock that stood solidly and with imposing dignity in the lower hall, had just boomed out the hour of midnight, when suddenly Susan sat up in bed, and began to softly call her sister, for it seemed to her that she was listening to a sound that was similar to the one that had been so startling earlier in the evening; this time however the scraping noise was as if a heavy or bulky body were being forced through an opening that was almost too narrow to admit of its passage; when Mary entered the room, she found her sister cowering down in mortal terror, with her curl-crowned

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head as well as her slim form completely covered by an intricate patterned patch-work quilt that, when beneath the light with its brilliant green and yellow flowers, skillfully disposed against a clear white back-ground, was a bit of noticeable and much-admired feminine handiwork; as soon as she knew that the younger girl was beside her, Susan, agitated and tremulous lifted herself into a kneeling posture, and with her soft warm lips very close to the other's ear whispered:

“Someone has just gone down the stairs into the front hall! What shall we do?”

Mary was badly frightened herself but did not wish to appear to be so.

“Perhaps” she suggested, “it was Father or Uncle 'Diah.”

“It was someone who moves lightly and quickly” Susan shudderingly replied, “someone who is young and strong.”

They clung to each other then for a few tense moments, and listened with bated breath; then all at once, as if the same impulse controlled them, they each suppressed a scream and each one hid her face upon the other's neck; for they could hear distinctly upon the wide and

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polished stairs that led from the front hall into the second story of the house, the trampling, terrifying sound of many roughly-shod trained and ordered feet; as if to make the situation yet more terrible, a clanking noise as of metal striking against metal accompanied the sound of trampling feet that kept advancing steadily with military precision; the two girls heard Aunt Dolly's quavering scream, and Uncle 'Diah's screeching yell, and then they knew that they, with probably all of the other servants, were scurrying away like so many frightened rabbits seeking cover; the widow, pale and trembling, evidently seriously alarmed, rushed into Mary's room, and finding it empty passed through it into that of her elder niece; just as she joined the younger women, a body of mounted horsemen at a gallop swept up the driveway, and a clear commanding voice evidently clothed with acknowledged authority called out:

“Surround the house! Allow no one to escape!”

Then followed a space of time that was replete with horror and confusion; the two girls still in each other's arms remained so, and no

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one was in a position to observe the staid and usually courageous widow when she calmly placed her fingers in her ears and retired into the farthest corner of the room, where she crouched down behind a heavy ward-robe which, as it seemed to her, offered some protection against the threatening danger; shots were fired, and cries of agony were heard, horses snorted and whinnied as they dashed madly to and fro, steel clashed against steel, men groaned and cursed and applied whatever epithets occurred to them, to those who were their adversaries and high above, and separated from the medley of discordant and appalling sounds one clear commanding voice rang out:

“Advance!” it cried at last and as it seemed to the beleaguered household drew very near, “Guard your prisoners carefully! Preserve formation! Dismount!” it ended finally, “Enter!”

To the helpless ones who were within the dwelling it seemed that the crucial moment had arrived, for who they were who were about to enter their abode whether they were friends or foes, or why they came at all, was entirely unknown to them; the little group in Susan's room

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listened fearfully while many doors were being opened and slammed shut, as if a thorough search were being made down-stairs; at length they heard the voice that had been all along directing the movements of the others saying:

“I will ascend the stairs alone. Remain here at the foot and if I need you I will call for you.”

And then a lithe form bounded lightly up the steps, and the owner of it came along the hall until he reached the door behind which the three women were in fear and trembling awaiting his approach; here he stopped, and as if he were about to make a social call knocked softly; those who were within looked fearfully at the door, and then into each other's faces; he who was without put a hand on the thumb-piece of the latch but found that he could not lift the latter as the precautionary measures that Mary had taken the evening before prevented him from doing so; as if this failure had decided him to employ different tactics than the ones that he had just been using, he made no further attempt to force an entrance, and indeed had started to pass on down the hall when suddenly Susan in desperation thinking that delay would not mend matters demanded:

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“Why did you enter this house? What or whom are you seeking?”

“I came,” a cheery, even mirthful voice replied, “because a friend of your family urged me to do so. I am in search of a young woman who told me once that her name was Susan Ward, spinster.”

CHAPTER V

AFFAIRS at Evergreen Hill very soon assumed a nearly normal and natural condition; the prisoners, including the slim young fellow who had admitted the night-riders into the dwelling of Mr. Ward were removed under guard at once; Uncle Obediah and Aunt Dolly with the other servants, shamefacedly returned when everything was once more safe and quiet and sheepishly resumed the performance of their regular duties; the widow as well as the two girls, seemed to recover almost immediately from the effects of the unpleasant experiences through which they had passed; the head of the household himself however, seemed to have had his nerves badly shaken by the attack that had been made upon his home; on the morning of the day that followed it, he had the appearance of one who not only has just passed through a harassed and sleepless night, but who is suffering greatly from anxiety and fore-boding as to the future; he, as it seemed, confided in no one concerning

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his doubts and his fears, but communed solely with his own inner consciousness, pacing slowly back and forth for hours, evidently engaged in deep thought, beneath the tall long-needed pines proudly lifting their heads before the house that had so recently been surrounded by armed men; his sister-in-law coming hurriedly out into the grounds, discovered him there, and apparently pleased by the opportunity thus offered to her joined him at once:

“I do not see,” she began, as soon as she had succeeded in attracting his attention from the absorbed abstraction in which it had been plunged, “why you consider that it is necessary to have this place patrolled by sentries night and day as if it were a fort or an arsenal. For my part,” she went on confidently, “I have no doubt that Lord Howe will win the day in case he comes to close quarters with the Frenchman. We would then, as loyal subjects of the English king be fully protected by his representatives, and the presence of these sentries furnished by those who are opposed to them, would be embarrassing rather than otherwise. Of course” she ended smiling derisively, “your daughters declare that they are in favor of the Yankees,

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but the private opinions of two attractive young women would, as I believe, be overlooked by the royal officers, especially in view of the fact that the loyalty of the older members of the family cannot be questioned."

Mr. Ward had undoubtedly heard all that she had said, for she was so daring that she had not taken the trouble to speak in a low tone of voice, but in spite of that fact he did not immediately answer her by picking up the conversational cudgel that she had for the time being laid down; instead, he regarded her in such a detached and indifferent manner, that she feared he was about to revert to his former abstraction; in order to prevent this and at the same time gain another end that she had had for quite awhile in mind, she with considerable emphasis and a good deal of warmth remarked:

"It seems to me that rather than to be half scared out of our wits every now and then as we were last night, it would be better for us to go in to New York City and stay there until after this revolution has finally been put down, and the instigators of it properly punished for their effrontery and insolence. Of course" she ended more mildly for she could see that her

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words had had very little effect upon him, "this is only a suggestion but it seems to me" she added spiritedly, "that it would be well for you to consider it."

"Well, Catharine," said Mr. Ward for she had at last badgered him into answering her, "you must use your best judgment as to your own actions; if you think that you would be safer and better off in the city than you are here do not allow anything to stand in the way of your immediate departure."

She looked at him closely to see if she could ascertain whether or not he were really in earnest. Seeing no sign of wavering on his part, she decided to take advantage of the opportunity that he had presented to her, by bringing forward some ideas of her own. They had been walking across the grounds while they talked, and had now reached an evergreen arbor formed of five Norway spruce trees, that had been planted in a circle, enclosing in their midst a single evergreen tree that was taller than any of those that surrounded it. A rather rudely fashioned round table had been placed about the central tree, that, shorn of its branches, rose column-like from the middle of it. They entered

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this arbor, and Mr. Ward sat down upon a bench near the entrance, while the widow chose a rustic seat that was near the table, upon which she rested one elbow as she said:

“I do not think that it would be proper or right to leave my nieces here in the country without a chaperon. I have tried in every way that has been within my power to guard them and to guide them. It is true that I have not always been able, — sighing deeply — to forcibly impress upon them the ideas concerning propriety and deportment that I have gained from my wide experience and careful observation.”

“Young girls,” she went on watching him appraisingly, “need to have an older woman of their own class near to them.” It seemed to her that this statement made some impression on him. “If you have ever thought of marrying again,” she went on boldly, in spite of the fact that he began to twist about, as if he were ill at ease, and would be glad to terminate the private chat that they were having, “you could not choose a better time in which to make that change in your daily life than the present.”

“You understand,” she ended looking down quite modestly, “that in saying this, I am con-

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sidering your daughters' welfare as much as, or perhaps even more than your own, although," she added as if she did not wish to leave an argumentative stone unturned, "any man who is alone would be much better off if he had a capable and helpful wife."

Mr. Ward squirmed and fidgetted, and was evidently trying to think of some way in which to courteously avoid following up the subject that his sister-in-law had just introduced, but the indefatigable widow did not intend, now that she had brought the matter up, to have it dropped so suddenly, as she could see that her auditor would be very glad to do, and so she cornered him completely by asking him directly:

"Don't you think that you would be happier and more comfortable than you are now if you were married?"

This was a poser, and the man looked anxiously about him as if in search of some way to escape, but not finding any, he figuratively faced the music and replied:

"That would probably depend largely upon what sort of woman I married."

Narrowing the subject down to personalities was just what she desired, and feeling that she

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had gained considerable ground, she jumped into the breach that he himself had made in the stony wall of his previous indifference.

“Why,” she said smiling at him archly and admiringly, “you would no doubt show your good sense, and your good taste at the same time, as you have always done, and you would choose,” she went on enumeratingly, “a woman who is old enough to look after your household affairs, and attend to the domestic education of your daughters, and yet young enough, to be a companion to them, as well as yourself. Of course,” she ended decidedly as if the fact could not be questioned, “you would, if possible, select someone who had had considerable experience, and had shown that she possessed good judgment.”

“You have not stated what you think the political views of his future spouse should be,” called out a merry bantering voice, “it seems to me that that would be a matter of importance.”

They looked up, and saw standing at the entrance to the evergreen arbor a tall, broad-shouldered, strong and rugged, yet slender and supple young man; the boyish, playful smile that was lurking in his dark-blue eyes, seemed

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as if it were a hidden light to shine through his otherwise earnest and thoughtful features, and lingered at the corners of his firm and yet not stubborn mouth; the soft acquiescence of the deep dimple by which his chin was cleft was denied by his broad high brow, rather prominent straight nose, and the general expression of determination and devotion to his own conception of the right that rested upon his fair and mobile, yet often sober and sometimes stern countenance. The emotions that were plainly written on the faces of the two within the arbor were almost exactly opposite. The widow startled and annoyed by the untimely interruption, evinced a feeling of sharp chagrin, while Mr. Ward was very evidently relieved. He immediately gave the new arrival a hearty greeting.

“I am very glad to see you James,” he said rising and advancing with extended hand toward the young man, “Have you seen the girls? If so,” he went on not waiting for an answer to his question, “you have already heard the particulars concerning our experience of last night. Now that you are here,” he ended, taking up a position near the newcomer outside of

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the arbor, "I am sure that Catharine" bowing courteously to the widow as if in token of farewell, "will excuse me while you and I together look about the place."

"Unless Mr. Fenimore particularly objects," cried the one who thus had been left alone in the arbor, bustling forward anxiously, "I will with your permission," smiling understandingly at the one whom she proposed to captivate, "go with you. But" she ended, "in order to make it possible for this boy here" playfully shaking a finger in the direction of the one whom she thus denominated, "to calmly endure the society of his elders, I will call Mary and ask her to be one of the party."

CHAPTER VI

AS THE little group strolled through the grounds, for Mary Ward had joyfully joined her sweetheart as soon as she had been made aware of his presence, the young man whose right arm had been placed protectingly and lovingly about the girl's slim form, laid his left hand familiarly upon her father's shoulder as he said:

“I would have been here myself last night had I followed my own inclinations, but I had duties to perform, for which as it seemed I was especially fitted and as you know a soldier is subject to orders. As soon as I was made aware of the attack that was about to be made upon your home, you can imagine the state of my feelings.” He pressed his lips against the smooth soft bands and heavy coils of dark-brown hair that covered the head of the girl who was keeping step with him. “I went at once to General Sullivan who is my superior officer, and told him all that I had heard, explaining to him my personal interest in the matter; I had gained the

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information that was the cause of my anxiety through a secret channel, that I hope always to keep open between this dear girl — hugging her a little nearer to him as he spoke — and myself whenever it is necessary for me to be separated from her; the General assured me that a rescue party would be sent out in time to head off, and, if possible capture the marauders.”

“I would have been terribly frightened James,” Mary shudderingly declared, “had I thought that you were among the contestants last night; Susan and I were almost wild with fear as it was; when our friends came riding up to the house we did not recognize the voice of the leader, although it is true that we had heard it before.”

“Who was he?” asked the young man quickly, evidently intensely interested, “Where had you met him?”

“His name,” the girl answered calmly, “is Courtney Monahan. He was our guest not very long ago.”

“Courtney Monahan!” her lover exclaimed evidently startled by the information he had just received, “I do not know . . . ” and then after a moment’s hesitation as if on second

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thought, he added, "What sort of man is he? Young or old, handsome or ugly, attractive or otherwise?"

Catharine Ward had been both listening and watching, and as she was always on the alert for anything that resembled even remotely, intrigue, deceit or mystery she decided that it was time for her to interfere.

"I believe that Susan could give a more complete description of his general appearance than any of the rest of the family" she began, thus relieving to some extent the apprehensive anxiety of one of her listeners, "but no one, it seems to me, could meet and talk with him without being more or less fascinated by him; to say that he is handsome, does not half express his unusual good looks, and to speak of him as being attractive, would not give one a correct idea as to the impression that his personality has upon those who come into his presence. He is" she ended, "without doubt young, but as to whether Courtney Monahan," looking inquisitively at the young soldier, "is his name or not we have no certain means of knowing."

"He has such honest eyes" said Mary earnestly, "and such a hearty boyish laugh! I do

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not think," she argued, "that he is anything except what he pretends to be."

"So Sir!" cried Catharine Ward, addressing the young man who was evidently puzzled by the revelation that had just been made, "You can see for yourself a little of what has been going on here during your absence!"

James Fenimore had paid strict attention to all that Mrs. Ward had said, and had looked sharply and searchingly at the young woman while she had been speaking in favor of the stranger, and he had also observed that Mr. Ward had so far taken no part in the conversation; he turned now to the older man upon whose shoulder his hand still lightly rested and inquired:

"What did you think of this unusual and engaging person, Sir?"

The owner of Evergreen Hill was apparently somewhat at a loss as to how to answer the question that had been put to him, for he nervously rubbed his forehead, first with one hand, and then with the other; after a short period of silence during which he could see that everyone who was present was awaiting his reply he said:

"He is a very pleasant and entertaining

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young man but," evasively and hesitatingly, "I did not notice anything that was particularly remarkable about either his appearance or his manner." And then as if he felt that something more was expected of him he added, "he arrived just in the nick of time last night, for within another hour we might all have been easily murdered with the house burned over our heads."

"I'm mighty glad that he arrived in time!" the young man fervently exclaimed, "If I am ever lucky enough to meet him face to face," looking fondly at the young woman beside him, "I shall try to make him understand what a priceless treasure he preserved for me!"

By this time, they had reached a point from which they could command a view of the driveway, and of the public road into which the driveway led; the sentry, who was pacing back and forth along the road that lay in front of the estate, looked up and recognizing them as members of the family of Mr. Ward, gave them a courteous military salute, and then apparently forgot them altogether; he had, however, gone but a short distance farther along his beat, when he suddenly threw his hands up in the air and

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fell forward upon his face; the young soldier immediately left the little group of which he was a part, and running to the place where the body of the stricken man was stretched upon the ground, he turned him over on his back, and found that a feathered arrow was sticking in his breast in such a manner as to show that it had pierced his heart so that it nevermore would throb and send the warm life-giving blood through all his human veins; Mary had instinctively followed the same impulse that had urged her lover to offer aid to the injured man, and was standing beside him, so that when he looked up, after having ascertained that the earthly tenement over which he leaned had lost that which animated and guided it, he met her pitiful commiserating gaze; without a word then he put his strong young arms beneath the dying man's shoulders, and the girl, who was also young and strong, clasped her arms about the knees of the recumbent figure; and so they lifted him and together carried him through the grounds, and into the wide entrance hall of the house, where they laid their burden gently down upon a broad settee that was at one side of the open fire-place; by this time, the other members

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of the family had joined the young couple, while timorous and trembling servants were peering wildly in at doors and windows.

As soon as the young soldier saw that he could be of no further assistance within the dwelling, he hurriedly sought the officer who was in command of those who were guarding Evergreen Hill, and related to him the particulars of the incident that had come under his observation; searching parties were at once sent out with the hope of apprehending the miscreant who had with premeditation and in cold blood deliberately murdered a fellow-being.

While the body of the assassin's victim was being prepared for burial, everyone in and about the place preserved a decorous and respectful attitude toward the one whose mortal existence had been so unceremoniously ended, but as soon as the body had been carried away by the dead man's comrades, to be deposited in its narrow grave, the tension was relaxed, and the widow felt at liberty for the first time to freely state her views concerning the affair.

"I told you," she said to Mr. Ward when she had succeeded in effectually cornering her unwilling brother-in-law, "that I believed it to

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be unwise, even dangerous to have patriotic sentries patrolling your property. I think that it is wise to be careful and cautious," she went on scornfully, "but I have always despised every form of cowardice and this experience only goes to show," she ended while her words fairly wilted the one to whom they were addressed, "how foolish it is to try to protect oneself against superior force and wisdom."

CHAPTER VII

AS SOON as darkness had set in upon the night that followed the mysterious death of the sentry, the men who had been sent out in search of the assassin began to return to Evergreen Hill to make reports and to receive further orders; one of these, after having related a somewhat thrilling experience that he had had in concluding his account said:

“The fellow disappeared as suddenly and completely as if he had been swallowed up; just as I was about to lay my hand upon him, he almost literally slipped through my fingers; I searched carefully all around the spot where I had last seen him, and jammed my bayonet into every hole that seemed big enough to conceal a muskrat, but could find no trace of him; after a while I gave it up, but just as I was about to leave the vicinity, something soft that felt a good deal like a gloved human hand, touched my shoulder; I turned around at once but nothing was in sight, and so I started again to come away and there, directly in my path, as if it had

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been put there as a warning, I found this arrow," holding up the object to which he referred, "sticking in the ground; it must have come" he ended, "from some little distance, for it had gone through the dried leaves and was imbedded to a depth of several inches in the solid earth."

"It looks very much like the one that killed our comrade this morning," remarked a man to whom the arrow had been handed for inspection, "and it may have been shot from the same bow."

"The hand that sent those two," declared James Fenimore who was critically examining the primitive missile, "might send a third at any moment as long as it is free to do so. It seems to me," he went on earnestly, "that we should not desist in our efforts to capture this cowardly yet bold and daring murderer. I," he ended looking around upon those who were near to him, "will volunteer to be one of three men who will spend tonight in scouring the neighborhood with the hope of finding him."

Almost immediately, the four men who had distinctly heard the remark that had just been made by the young soldier, stepped forward,

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and saluting their commanding officer, asked permission to share in the hazardous undertaking to which James Fenimore had declared himself as being willing to devote, if necessary, the entire night; the cool, yet eager determination of their manner, testified to their knowledge of the personal danger that they were about to incur, as well as to their earnest desire to avenge the death of their comrade; the volunteer leader of the expedition looked gratefully at those who were thus offering him their aid, but instantly, seriously and emphatically said:

“Two lives besides my own are enough to be risked at least for the present in this dangerous enterprise; if you are willing to detail two of your men for this work,” he ended, respectfully addressing the officer in charge, “I would be very glad to have their assistance and I would advise” he added, anxiously, “that we start out as soon as possible, as the moon does not rise until late tonight and twilight will not last much longer.”

After considerable discussion, two of the four men were selected for the service about to be entered into and as soon as arrangements concerning ammunition and other necessary

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supplies, as well as reinforcements, in case of desperate need had been satisfactorily made, the young leader of the little party went hastily to the house, where, after finding Mary who indeed had been impatiently awaiting his coming, he explained to the loving and badly frightened girl something of the nature of what he was about to do, asking her at the same time, to maintain strictly utter silence with regard to the matter.

“Do not be alarmed Sweetheart,” he said to her fondly and reassuringly, “if I should not return before mid-day tomorrow. I shall feel much safer about you” he ended, pressing her willowy form for one thrilling moment close to his throbbing heart, “after I know that this hidden menace to your peace and happiness has been removed.”

“James,” she whispered, softly putting her arms about his neck and pulling his head down so that his lips were on a level with her own, “I know that you are brave, and I honor you for the decision that you have just made, but remember always,” her sweet voice trembled as their young lips met, “that you are dearer to me than life itself.”

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Then with a hasty, half-smothered word of farewell, the young man rushed away; he soon joined the two men who had volunteered to accompany him, and together they set forth cautiously on foot, turning their faces toward the trackless wilderness, in search of what was more intelligent, more wily and far more dangerous, than any beast of prey.

The soldier who had found the arrow in his path, was one of the little party, and he as quietly as possible guided the others to the spot where the mysterious incident that he had already described to them had occurred; the shadows of night were already resting darkly among the hills, and beneath the tall widely branching, densely foliated, deciduous trees, that at that season of the year, seventeen hundred and seventy-eight, shouldered each other in the primeval forest that stretched in silent grandeur along the high and palisaded banks of the picturesque and beauty-bordered Hudson river; the men had previously arranged a signal, so that each one of them could, with considerable certainty notify the others of any discovery that he might make; they were proceeding in single file, each at some little distance

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from the others, warily watching, and constantly listening for any indication of the nearness of their treacherous, venomous, strong, resourceful foe; the young leader was a little in advance of his companions, and had almost reached the spot where, as he knew from the description that had been given to him, the arrow that had evidently been a practical and pointed threat, had made its way into the firm leaf-covered ground; he had stopped to examine carefully into the immediate surroundings, and was kneeling down to see if he could find any traces like broken twigs, piled-up leaves or bare spots that had not been made by the blowing of the wind, of human foot-prints; it seemed to him that he could feel the outline of a moccasin, and he was coolly calculating what probably the length and breadth of the foot of the wearer of it must have been, when suddenly, a voice that sounded as if it must be very near indeed called out not loudly and yet with penetrating distinctness:

“Does my white brother then who is so young and strong desire to die?”

At the same time, he felt a soft insistent tap upon his shoulder as if someone were beckoning

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to him, and instinctively turned in the direction from which what seemed to be a summons had been sent; he did not hear the arrow coming, he did not see it when it fell, and yet he felt as certain as if he had both seen and heard it, that he would find it there within the path that he had just passed over; kneeling down again, for he had risen to his feet when he had turned around, he put out his right hand hastily, and almost instantly it touched the oscillating shaft where it, still quivering from its flight, reminded him tangibly of his comparatively defenseless position; picking up the silent messenger, he left the place where it had reached him, and cautiously signaling his comrades, he displayed it to them; they then, after consulting with each other, proceeded to surround as nearly as they could, the point from which as it appeared to them the warning arrows had been sent; as if the one whom they had hopes to apprehend had been apprised of their intention, what seemed to them to be a shower of winged shafts fell almost as if by magic, so rapidly and regularly did they follow one another upon and around the different stations that had been selected by the three men;

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it hardly seem possible to them that all of these feathered missiles could have been shot from one bow; in spite of their number, however, each man for some little time congratulated himself upon having come through the ordeal unharmed; and in the meantime, each one of the man-hunters fired shot after shot into what, as it seemed, must be the enemy's strong-hold; but the arrows continued to fly thickly and as at first, they covered a wide area; at last to all appearances one of them had found its mark for instead of musket-shots being poured in from three directions upon the spot where, as it seemed, the enemy must in some strange way have found concealment, they suddenly began to come from only two; the men who were still actively engaged in carrying on the fusilade, concluding that their silenced comrade had been at least desperately if not mortally wounded, redoubled their efforts to dislodge their foe who, as it seemed to them, was being protected by some agency that was beyond their knowledge; all at once, from somewhere in their rear, there arose a shout of triumph in a voice that unmistakably came from the exultant throat of a white man; this shout was accompanied by a

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hoarse yell of surprised and baffled rage, and was followed by a shriek of defeated dying agony that drifted off into the darkness and the forest, in a prolonged and wailing cry; immediately the two men with bayonets at the ready, hurried to the spot from which the cry arose.

At first, as they neither saw nor heard anything, they wondered if they had in some mysterious manner been again deceived; and then, they heard their leader's voice as if it came from somewhere above them.

“He's been roosting in the top of this tall tree,” he called down to them excitedly, “like an evil bird of prey and prodding us, when we came near enough, with a long pole padded at the end with buck-skin!”

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN the three men who had volunteered to try to find the slayer of the sentry made their report that night, they had with them as evidence of their success, a very strong and supple bow with leather thongs cleverly attached to it, many sharp flint-headed arrows, together with the quiver that contained them, and a gory gruesome object that none of those who saw it could contemplate without a shudder; there was upon one side of this repulsive object, a long, thick lock of straight black hair, and after the young leader of the volunteers had shown this limp and harmless, but suggestive thing to those who wished to satisfy themselves that the object on account of which the venture had been made, had been accomplished, he carried it gingerly away and did not bring it back again.

Meanwhile, the French commander found that the vessels of his fleet could not gain an entrance to the bay in order to attack the squadron of Lord Howe, and hence proceeded

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to Rhode Island; General Sullivan, under whose command James Fenimore was serving, planned to cooperate with this representative of a friendly foreign power, and concentrated his own forces at Providence; this move made it necessary for the young soldier to cut short his visit at Evergreen Hill, much to his own regret, as well as that of at least one member of the family of Mr. Ward; Mary regarded him tearfully on the eve of his departure and clinging fondly to him declared:

“The days of your absence will be very long, fear-laden days for me,” looking lovingly into his clouded eyes, “I shall try to be brave and do my part as every patriot should,” her sweet lips trembled and her young voice shook with deep emotion, “but I shall not know a single, happy, peaceful hour until you can come back to me.”

“Providence has thus far protected me,” the young man answered submissively and reverently, “although I have been many times in the midst of dire dangers. If it be the will of God,” he ended calmly, although his arms as if of their own volition clasped convulsively her slender form and held it close, “that you and I should

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join our human lives together and spend long years of peace and happiness in each other's company then, Sweetheart, I will return to you for if I do not do so it will be through no fault of mine."

After that came the actual leave-taking, which was so tender and so tearful, that the lovers, in spite of their devotion to the cause that was about to separate them for an indefinite period of time, could find no words, or for that matter, voices through which to express the overpowering emotions that were shaking the very centres of their lives.

Soon after the young soldier had returned to his regiment, the sentries, who had been patrolling Mr. Ward's estate, were removed on account of the fact that the scene of probably almost immediate hostilities had been changed, so that it was by a considerable distance farther away from Evergreen Hill than it had been before; this removal left the premises, to all appearances, almost exactly as they had been before the night attack had been made upon them; there were several low mounds of newly turned earth in the immediate vicinity, and there was one narrow grave that had been only

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lately covered with dried leaves and underbrush; some good-sized rocks had been piled upon this grave, but not as some might suppose for the purpose of preventing the occupant of it from escaping therefrom but with the desire to preserve the remains that had been concealed within it from the depredations of the carnivorous, wild creatures that roamed in great numbers through the forest and among the hills; even had there been nothing to show that it had been selected as the last resting-place of a human body, it is more than probable that with unerring instinct the young woman who, the next day after the rocks had been placed there, crept cautiously among the trees toward the spot would, as soon as she came within sight of it have gone directly to it; as it was, she did not hesitate an instant but ran to it at once, and threw herself in wild abandon down upon it; clutching pitifully at the dried leaves that covered it, she gave vent to her uncontrollable anguish of spirit through low moans and suppressed, but heart-rending cries; after awhile, during which, with her slight sinuous form constantly shaken by deep despairing sobs, she did not cease to writhe and twist about upon the

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ground, now pushing madly against the rocks, now digging into the loam that was around them with her straight, strong and supple fingers, now tearing at the long, heavy braids of straight black hair that, hanging down on either side of her dark face, across her broad full softly rounded breast, reached below her slim and pliant waist, and again gnashing her strong, white, even teeth, she arose, and began stealthily and systematically to examine the surroundings, going carefully over every inch of the ground and inspecting with great attention to minutae, the bark of the trees, as well as the bushes and underbrush that grew beneath them; she was crawling along on her hands and knees through a tangled growth of saplings, when suddenly she uttered a low cry which indicated first, surprised and satisfying joy, and then bitter and unmitigated sorrow; when she came out on the other side of the little covert, she was dragging the long pole that had been used to deceive and mystify the men who had gone into the woods to find the murderer of the sentry.

As soon as she was clear of the underbrush, she carefully examined what she had found, looking at it lovingly and understandingly as if

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it were something that she had often seen before ; she passed her hand affectionately over the buckskin that covered one end of the pole, smoothing out the little creases that had been made in it, and looking critically at the lacing of the rawhide thongs that held it in place ; as if she felt that she could gain no more knowledge from a further consideration of the pole, she stood it up so that it leaned against a young pine tree that was the only tree upon a little knoll or hummock ; she then resumed her search, and after a little time looked up and saw a branch that had been broken high up in a tall tree ; without a moment's hesitation, indeed as if what she had seen had been a sign-post pointing out the way for her to go, she threw her arms around the tree-trunk, and digging first the toe of one of the moccasins that she wore upon her feet, and then that of the other one into the tiny crevices formed by the roughness of the bark that covered it, began laboriously to make her way by slow degrees up to the place where she could lay hold of the lowest branches of the forest giant.

The task that she had undertaken was not an easy one, but she had had considerable practice

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in the application of this particular portion of the education that is essential to the training of a daughter of the wilderness; as soon as she could touch the first one of the branches of the tree, she climbed more rapidly, and before long she reached the spot that had attracted her attention from the ground; here she rested, and breathing hard, both from her recent exertion and the anxious foreboding that had prompted it, looked about her with wide eyes and parted lips. Suddenly, it was evident that she had discovered something, for she leaned forward, and looked more closely at a certain spot that was not far from where the branch had been broken; the spot at which she gazed as if fascinated so that the pupils of her large limpid dark eyes dilated with horror, was of a peculiar dull red color as if some thin, warm, brilliant liquid had been poured out slowly so that it had splashed, drop by drop, upon the living verdure of the tree; she stared fixedly at the disfiguring stain, until she realized that what had caused it had come from some place that was still above her head; then, looking up, she swayed so that she almost fell, for gazing down at her, or so it seemed to her at first from where it had been

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hidden by the thick foliage that was around it, was a face, that during her acquaintance with the owner of it, she had always up to that moment loved to look upon; with a scream of rage and agony, that was almost as hoarse and gurgling as the death-cry that had been echoed backandforth within the woods the night before, she swung herself up by an almost superhuman effort, until her own face, that was distorted by many conflicting emotions, was very near to the hideous mask that was but a bloody remnant of the strong, straight, sinewy body that had been the earthly tenement of a cold and crafty, fierce and cruel, yet passionately loving spirit.

As if all at once she for the first time fully understood the situation, the young woman began to sing a wierd wild wailing melody; the tones of her voice were high and broken, but sweet and powerful; the words that her quivering lips were forced by her strong will to utter, were in an Indian dialect and could not be correctly translated into the English language, but their meaning was, that she, all alone, despairing desperate and desolate would from that moment, always be a bitter enemy of the race of men that had sent forth the ones who, before

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he had arrived at full maturity, had cut off in his youth and vigor her noble chieftain. Then her manner and her song both changed, and she commenced to chant in measured, stately reverential rhythm, petitioning the One Who had created him for whom she mourned, to take again beneath His Care the deathless spirit that had so lately inhabited the handsome, dignified, imposing face and form that were so different from any other human face or form, that this one being was compared with others, as the sun among the stars shutting them entirely from view, because of his superior, dazzling brightness; she asked that he might be at once permitted to enter and enjoy the happy hunting-grounds, and if in order to bestow this mighty favor on him it should necessitate the suffering of someone on the earth, she knowing well that it might mean for her long years of sorrow and of loneliness, expressed a strong desire to bear whatever must be borne, in order to achieve his happiness; she did not ask, she said humbly and devoutly, a single favor for herself, not even that she might join him when her stay on earth was ended; her whole heart had been bound up in him, and in his greatness, while she

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had in every way that had been within her power, served and cared for him, and now that she could no longer bask beneath the warmth of his infrequent, but for that very reason as well as others longed-for smiles, she wished to help to make for him — although the making might involve for her the one supremely awful sacrifice of renunciation — an open and inviting path into a wider and more satisfying world than was the one in which she still remained.

After that, she calmly, even stoically — a disinterested observer might have said — removed with her own unaided, bare, warm hands every trace so far as possible of the tragedy that had been enacted there in the darkness amid the vastness of nature's amphitheatred silences.

CHAPTER IX

IN SPITE of the lack of many of the modern means of communication between those who are separated from each other by material distance, residents of the United States of America during the first few years of that great nation's existence, were made aware through means that now,—because they are no longer necessary are almost entirely unknown — of important events, whether of a general or individual nature, much more promptly and accurately, than looking backward upon the facilities then available would seem probable or even possible; some of the methods employed, were so strange and so secret that, viewed in the light of modern investigation, they seem to be almost supernatural, and certainly to say the least wierd and uncanny; human beings must always to a great extent depend, in order to obtain the practical knowledge that is essential to the successful management of their daily affairs, upon the evidence that is furnished to them by their five, fundamental, primitive,

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powerful senses; when all of the complicated part of the delicate machinery, that together with the directing intelligence that operates it, constitutes the working force of the mortal frame, are in perfect order, the human body is in its natural and normal condition; a state of complete bodily health is the result of the consumption of the proper amount of suitable food, sufficient congenial muscular exercise, and a tranquil contented or at least resigned state of mind; pioneer life in itself, is conducive to mental and physical health, because it calls into action all the resources of both mind and body and thus strengthens and enlarges them; the enervating tendencies of ease and affluence are too well known to be dwelt upon here; the evidence that is furnished to the human intellect by the five physical senses is keener and surer when the bodily agents are frequently called into action than when they are allowed for any great length of time to remain idle; pioneer life demands that all of the powers, of whatsoever kind and nature, that are possessed by a human being shall be sharply and continuously on the alert; only those who are bountifully endowed both with mental and physical strength can

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excel, or even successfully compete in the strenuous struggle for existence where everything depends upon individual exertion, ingenuity and initiative.

Although transportation at that time was possible only through the employment as motive power of creatures possessed of flesh and blood, yet those who lived during the period of the American revolutionary war upon what was then generally known as the neutral ground, were kept very well informed as to what was going on at the points where the mighty adversaries were, or were about to be engaged in actual conflict; not altogether, and yet to some extent, through signs and portents if a careful study of climatic conditions combined with a definite knowledge as to the relative positions of the signs of the zodiac could be considered as pertaining to them, the inhabitants of the territory that was contiguous to, in fact in many instances between the positions that were occupied by the opposing armies were reliably although not officially informed concerning much that was happening, or that was about to happen, at some little distance from their homes; through natural, although somewhat unique

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methods, the members of the family of Mr. Ward were made aware of the probability of an immediate engagement between the English fleet then in American waters on one side, and the French fleet aided by land forces under the command of General Sullivan on the other. They also knew, almost immediately after it had become an actual fact, that the anticipated naval battle did not take place on account of a violent storm that greatly damaged both fleets; when General Sullivan laid siege to Newport, he had no idea that a tall slender gray-eyed girl was kneeling down beside a huge four-posted bed in her own room at Evergreen Hill; but Mary Ward was very conscious of the fact that this particular American general, as well as those who followed after him, was about to be exposed to dire danger, that his life and the lives of those who were supporting him were about to be placed in jeopardy, and as she knelt there, she was praying not only for her country's cause to which she was above and over every other consideration, devotedly attached but also for a certain strong, straight, slender soldier whose dark-blue eyes would as she hoped, look into hers again. She clasped her slim white

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hands together as she prayed, and lifted up her face as if she thought that thus her words would rise more surely and directly to that great throne on which as she believed the Judge of every world that held a thing of life, the arbiter of every fate however much that fate might be exalted or condemned, was listening and watching always; her eyes were closed, so that her heavy, long, brown lashes brushed her soft flushed cheeks; her warm red lips and smooth round chin were trembling with emotion as she said:

“Father Who art in heaven,” her tones were low and reverent, “I humbly entreat You, and here upon my knees although I know I am not worthy of so much consideration, for I am but a feeble and often mistaken finite being, I beg of You to watch over and if it be Thy Will protect from harm the man whom I, with all the strength that is within me, love and whose wife I hope to be. I ask this in the Name of Him Who died upon the cross Who was Your well-beloved only earth-born Son.”

And when her prayer was finished, she bowed her brown head down, and still upon her knees, writhing in her mental agony, she wept. She had

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a dark foreboding, that even if her lover should survive the engagement into which he with his comrades in arms were about to enter, he might perhaps be sorely wounded, so that she would nevermore behold him sound, straight and strong as any tree that was within the forest as he had been when she had seen him last; and although it seemed to her that anything untoward that would happen to him, would but make him dearer to her, yet she shuddered at and shrunk back from the thought of him crippled, perhaps blinded, so that instead of being as he had always been, a happy, helpful, hopeful, cheery, boyish fellow he would become a sorrowing, dependent, suffering, perhaps, despairing man.

She was very sad because of mere anticipation and imaginary fears, but when she knew that General Sullivan had been forced to retreat, that he had been pursued, and that a battle had been fought with great loss to her own countrymen, her anguish was redoubled. Then for many weary days no news that was authentic found its way into her secluded home; but at last, one day, just at dusk, after Uncle Obediah and his assistants had made

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everything secure for the night, a big roan horse came sedately walking instead of wildly galloping, as he had done one night some time before, up the driveway at Evergreen Hill. He and his rider were without companions, and as they slowly moved along, they both looked curiously about them through the gathering gloom that the advancing night was casting over the surrounding landscape; the young man leaned a little forward in his saddle, and peered anxiously ahead, as if trying to descry some object that he had hoped to see, but as if somewhat disappointed he straightened up after a little while, and sighed deeply; but in spite of his apparent sadness, he urged his mount into a little faster gait than the one that he had been employing, and went on up the little rise of ground upon which the great white house with its dark-green shutters had been built; as he approached the rear of the dwelling, Uncle Obediah, who in his own little white-washed cottage was as it were on guard, suddenly and somewhat fearfully called out:

“Who goes dar? Fren’ or foe?” and then as he could begin to see the features of the new-

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comer he added, "Is yo' got some kin' o' tidins?"

"Roan and I," the rider answered glibly, "have come directly from James Fenimore and we have a letter for Miss Mary from him."

CHAPTER X

AFTER Mary, with the precious missive that had just been delivered to her by Courtney Monahan, had retired to her own room, the young American officer although somewhat hampered by the positive presence of the middle-aged and most officious widow, endeavored affably and courteously to interest and amuse the elder daughter of Mr. Ward; while speaking enthusiastically of the commander-in-chief of the patriotic forces, he exhibiting earnest feeling declared:

“He moves constantly as if he were enveloped in a cloak of impenetrable dignity that so completely covers him, that it gives to him a sort of aloofness from the rest of humanity, and yet he has so much simplicity, that he always attends to the smallest detail that will in any way affect the happiness of those who are dependent upon him. His entire individuality was cast in a large heroic mold. His personal magnetism, as well as his most unusual cheery hopefulness, has been a potent force in the work of keeping

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his armies in the field; I, myself, have seen bodies of troops so disheartened as to be almost in despair, become suddenly animated and busily engaged in making plans for the future because George Washington, courageous and serene in spite of all misfortune, and in spite of cloudy skies rode slowly along within range of the vision of the men for they all knew him and knowing him of course," he ended eagerly and admiringly, "they loved and honored him."

Susan had been bestowing her undivided and entire attention upon the speaker, and had followed every one of his words with keen interest; and as soon as he had finished she, with for the first time during his acquaintance some slight show of personal curiosity, asked:

"Have you been closely associated with our great leader so that you have been very near to him?"

The young man looked at her at first proudly, and opened his mouth as if about to answer her, but before he did so, a dazed expression crept into his full dark eyes, and with his lips still parted, while a vivid red spot blazed in either of his sensitive smooth cheeks, he hesitated as if he found that it was necessary to

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carefully consider the words that he was about to utter; after a little while, during which not only the girl, but also the older woman regarded him with an intense absorbing interest he said guardedly and awkwardly:

“I was at Valley Forge last winter as were very many others of our fellow country-men, and I was at one time fortunate enough to be able to serve our glorious commander in rather an especial manner, so that it was necessary for me often to personally consult with him and it was my privilege to know him more intimately than many of the others did. . .”

Catharine Ward had been “holding in,” as she would have expressed her condition, for some little time, and just as the young man had reached this point in his discourse, she had, as she would have said, come to the end of her string and it had become imperative that she should take a hand in the conversation; eying him so sharply that the attitude assumed by her was almost a belligerent one, she demanded:

“What position do you occupy in the American army? What is your rank?”

But Susan blushing rosily, and looking very sweet and coy, interfered in time to prevent

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further incivilities, which as could be seen the widow's very agile tongue was ready to bestow upon their handsome and just at that moment, hesitating guest:

"Aunt Catharine," she began respectfully and yet reprovably, "it does not seem to me to be quite courteous to James to ask such questions of his friend who has just come to us from him. Even if this had not been the case" she went on as if emboldened by the sound of her own voice, looking shyly at the subject of her remarks from beneath her long and drooping lashes, "we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Monahan which kindness and consideration could scarcely pay."

The comments that the widow might have made upon the statements of her niece, will not be recorded here, for at that moment Mary, much agitated, holding the letter of her lover open in her hand, entered the room; as if she had no doubt as to the sympathy of all of those who were within hearing, she, stopping from time to time to wipe away the tears that almost blinded her, began to read portions of the communication that she had so recently received:

"If this reaches you, it will be through the kindness of one to whom I am already deeply

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indebted." She stopped then, and allowed her gaze to rest thankfully for a moment upon the face of the one to whom the writer had referred, "I am now," her sweet voice trembled but she went bravely on, "a prisoner of war having fallen into the hands of the enemy after the siege of Newport as I had been slightly," she unconsciously emphasized this word, "wounded and was left with many others upon the battlefield when the majority of my comrades very fortunately managed to escape from the island. What the charges are that will be brought against me, I have no means of knowing; but whatever they are or their results may be, you and I have always been, and are now well prepared," these courageous words were very hard to read, but she did the best she could, "to meet them; for we know that," her tones grew stronger and more reverential, "only by following the road that we have thus far followed have we been able to serve the cause of our well-beloved country, and to uphold the splendid standard of the great and good and glorious Washington."

The young officer had listened thoughtfully, while the girl was reading, and when she ceased,

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and concealing her face behind a snowy kerchief gave way to tears, he went to her, and leaning down, laid one hand in brotherly fashion lightly upon her shoulder while he said:

“Do not despair. He may yet be restored to you. . .“This letter” he explained, “was given to me by a man who had had explicit instructions as to its disposal from the writer of it; this man had also been a prisoner in the hands of the British, but had been exchanged by them for one of their own men who had been captured by us.”

As the proverbial drowning man will catch at a mere straw, so Susan in her great anxiety to relieve her sister’s distress, enlarged upon the thought that had thus been brought forward; she had been standing behind the chair in which the younger girl was sitting, and under the sudden impetus of hope, stepped eagerly forward just touching the young officers’s arm as she exclaimed:

“Then James may be sent back at any time! There are always some English prisoners within our lines are there not?” looking up directly into the sympathetic face that was very near to her own, “surely it could be arranged”

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she ended dropping her white gold-fringed lids over her beaming blue eyes, "if only. . ."

Then she stopped, for on the face at which she once more shyly glanced, she saw a look of powerful determination that somehow seemed to change the whole expression of it; it was as if the merry, courteous mask that he had gracefully and most effectively been wearing, had dropped away completely and revealed what had been all the time beneath it; with this changed expression, that seemed to place him instantly at a considerable distance from his actual material surroundings, on his countenance he said:

"All the influence that I can bring to bear upon this case shall be exerted at once. In order to further this matter," he ended bowing respectfully to the two sisters as well as to their chaperon, "it will be necessary for me to leave here immediately."

CHAPTER XI

ALTHOUGH Mr. Ward was conscious of, and naturally regretted the conditions that had been the means of bringing bitter sorrow and keen anxiety into his younger daughter's daily life, yet, as if absorbed in the consideration of some matter of great importance, as compared with which everything else seemed trivial, he not only apparently did not make any attempt to alleviate the situation, but so far as possible he avoided making any reference to the fact that the young man who, ever since he had first begun to toddle about upon his uncertain human feet, had been in and out as a privileged and familiar guest of his own home, was then a helpless prisoner entirely at the mercy of a cruel and relentless foe; the younger members of the family at Evergreen Hill, were painfully aware of the fact that the head of the house did not share their enthusiastic devotion to the new nation of which they considered themselves to be a part, but even with this knowledge, they were surprised at his seeming

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indifference concerning the fate of one in whose success and happiness he had always, to all appearances been personally interested.

Mary had tearfully confided to him her hopes and fears with regard to the future of her lover, and as she remembered afterward, the only part of the account that she gave him, in which her father had evinced any particular interest, was that in which she had explained her reasons for believing that much would be gained through the interference of Courtney Monahan; he had watched her closely, while she had described to him the young officer's expression of his eager and almost adoring admiration of the leader of the American armies; when she had concluded this description, the one to whom it had been given had, while he looked at her keenly without preliminary explanation or excuse, suddenly asked:

“Did he claim to be very near to Washington? Did he say that he knew him very well?”

“He did not boast.” the girl had loyally replied, “But” she had continued reminiscently, “when he told us that he had last winter at Valley Forge been fortunate enough to perform for our great leader's benefit, some special ser-

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vice, the expression of dignity and authority that came into his face made him appear older and more experienced than he had seemed to us to be before, and so," she ended naively, "I am hoping constantly that he may at any moment, succeed in setting James at liberty."

Mr. Ward had not pursued the subject further, and his daughter, absorbed as she had been at the time, in the contemplation of her lover's probable fate, had not considered that the attitude he had taken was of any special significance; it was only in the light of subsequent events that she realized its full meaning.

Catharine Ward had evidently no scruples concerning the expression of her opinion of the young man who had for the third time, terminated a short but eventful visit to Evergreen Hill; having failed in her attempt to obtain from him the definite information that she coveted, she deliberately proceeded to fill in the blanks in her actual knowledge according to her own ideas, and having in this manner made a complete and continuous record, referred to it as freely as if she had found it where it had been placed legally and openly among other important and indubitable archives. One afternoon

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not long after the young officer's last departure from the estate of Mr. Ward, the widow who had for some time been planning an interview of the sort, succeeded in cornering her brother-in-law at a time, and in a place, when and where as it seemed to her, they would not be likely to be interrupted in any conversation that they might be carrying on; she overlooked the feeble resistance he made when he saw that he was caught, and was soon gratified to observe that she had succeeded in arousing his interest during her explication of the first subject that she had introduced for discussion; she had meant to merely touch upon this subject, among many others that she intended to use as trail-breakers, to blaze the way by means of which, she hoped to advance some weighty arguments in favor of the state of matrimony. But when she found that her enforced auditor was paying strict attention to all that she said, she decided to continue to travel upon what seemed to be safe ground, and having long since used up all the authentic data that she had at her command, she began to draw upon her vivid imagination, depending largely upon her ability along the line of extemporaneous invention; finally, hav-

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ing almost entirely exhausted her resources of every form and nature, rendered almost desperate by Mr. Ward's continued silence, as well as her own lack of material, she determined to prolong the interview that she had succeeded in obtaining, demanded:

"What did you yourself think of this handsome gay young fellow?" She waited then for his reply, but as it did not seem to be at once available, she added, "Do you approve of the flirtation that he is carrying on with Susan?"

Goaded into speech, the man evidently without much forethought, blurted out:

"All that I ask of him, or for that matter of any other man, is to be allowed to pursue my own way peacefully. I do not like turmoil and excitement," he went on, glancing nervously around, "and I do not care to have strangers coming and going about the place. I am expecting" he ended solemnly as if he were making an important announcement, "a distinguished visitor here soon and I hope that matters will be so arranged as to make everything congenial and pleasant during his stay."

Thus another topic was introduced, and the conversation soon drifted away from a

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consideration of the character and appearance of the capable, eager, alert young officer who at that moment, although separated by many inexorable miles from Evergreen Hill, was going over in memory with great attention to minutiae, the individual incidents that within his own knowledge had occurred upon Susan Ward's father's estate; he dwelt particularly upon the few fleeting moments during which the girl, whose fair sweet face with its quick changes of soft and rosy coloring was often brought before his inner vision, devoted her entire attention to him; it seemed to him that he could almost see her clear blue eyes as they had more than once shyly, questioningly, and yet daringly, glanced toward him; it seemed to him, that he could almost hear the soft, carefully modulated tones of her low, well-bred, trained yet natural voice; youth has its happy dreams and vivid fancies always; those who dream are not confined to narrow boundaries of time or space, but traverse wide, and from a material standpoint, often impassable, distances so quickly and easily that the journey seems to have been made through the employment of magic; and so, these two young beings, although humanly speaking

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far apart, were actually very near together, for Mr. Ward's elder daughter was also mentally reviewing the seemingly accidental circumstances that had led up to and continued her acquaintance with Courtney Monahan; she had been thrillingly and deeply moved by his engaging personality, and as his views concerning the vital questions of the day coincided with her own and he had in every way lived up to the opinions that would reasonably be based upon his appearance, nothing detracted from the first impression that she had had of him when Roan and he had stopped, upon an evening that now seemed long ago, beside the rustic seat on which she sat; indeed, that first impression had been emphasized and strengthened by what had followed after that unexpected but certainly propitious meeting.

And so they dreamed, and meanwhile, events over which they had no control were being so shaped as to govern and direct their lives.

CHAPTER XII

ALMOST immediately after Mr. Ward had announced to his sister-in-law that he was expecting a guest whom he desired to greatly honor, the widow began to make preparations for his entertainment. Various culinary matters had to be arranged for, considerably in advance of the time in which they would be needed, as the household at Evergreen Hill had to be sufficient unto itself in very many ways and could not depend upon having supplies brought in on short notice; accordingly, in order to have everything in readiness, judging from the widow's point of view, to properly extend a welcome to the one whose arrival was expected, it was necessary to dissarrange, in fact practically to almost completely upset, the entire invisible but potent machinery upon the smoothly quiet running of which depended the equanimity and consequently the enjoyment of all of those upon the small estate; servants were dispatched hither and yon to bring in, or to carry out, whatever the general director de-

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sired to have changed as to location; the whole house was swept and garnished from cellar to attic inclusive; if there was a gossamer cobweb, or a speck of dust left anywhere about, it was not because Mrs. Ward had knowingly allowed it to remain there. If there was a single floor in any of the rooms that did not shine, as if it had been newly polished, it was because the widow had not yet discovered its conditions; if there was a sconce, or candelabrum, or even a common candle-stick that had not been thoroughly cleaned and vigorously rubbed, it was because it had been completely hidden or intentionally misplaced; a plentiful supply of extra candles also had to be conveniently near at hand, so that when there should be need of them, they could be quickly found, and these extra candles had to be gone over carefully, counted and tested, and then again laid down in orderly array. Every bed in the house including the bedstead upon which it rested, had to be taken apart and carried out in the yard, where, after having been thoroughly inspected, cleaned, renovated and repaired it was allowed to lay for some hours under the unimpeded rays of the sun; Uncle Obediah with an extensive retinue of

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assistants was directed to clean out, and calk up all of the numerous broad, deep fire-places, with which the house was well furnished, after which process, all of the andirons, fenders, pokers, tongs and shovels as well as the pots, pans and kettles had to be scrubbed, rubbed, scoured and polished; besides these and many other endeavors to bring about a state of what at least would be near to pristine cleanliness, many other preparations had to be made; some of these were of a peculiarly intricate and complicated nature; so much so, that they involved the whole available working force and even made demands upon some who did not ordinarily spend much time or strength upon either mental or manual labor; one of the latter was the master of the house himself, who had not fully realized just what sort of position he was placing himself in when he had at least partially taken his sister-in-law into his confidence regarding his expected visitor, until even his obtuseness could not fail to detect that the astute and indefatigable widow on every possible occasion and with even the most flimsy of excuses insisted upon having his personal advice, even concerning the most trivial matters,

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and in this way he was obliged to spend a great deal of time in her company. One day when the two were closeted in a somewhat out-of-the-way place, she suddenly resumed a conversation that had been interrupted some little time before:

“Is the fact that Courtney Monahan is such a pronounced Yankee your main reason for disliking him? Or” she went on as if wishing to allow her auditor time in which to recover from the start that her words had evidently given him, “is it because you do not trust him? Because” she ended frankly and confidentially, “I think he is too glib to be quite honest.”

If Mr. Ward was secretly displeased on account of the implication that had just been made regarding the state of his feelings toward the young man whose name had just been mentioned, he did not refer to the fact, nor on the other hand, did he add to the affirmation that the widow had just made his personal endorsement; instead, he diplomatically, and as it would seem wisely, steered clear of both these shoals upon which he might have easily and quickly wrecked his conversational boat:

“Catharine,” he began, regarding her in a kindly and yet an impersonal manner, “it seems

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to me that the whole house is now spick and span, in fine condition. It must be that your preparations are almost completed. You certainly have worked hard and deserve to enjoy the fruits of your labor. "The widow's face lighted up and she was about to speak, but her brother-in-law as if unconscious of her intention, continued, "when governmental affairs have been finally and properly settled" he looked at her significantly, "I think that it will be possible for me to arrange matters so that you will have no regret on account of any effort that you have already made, or that you will make in the future, tending toward the comfort and happiness of the one whom I hope soon to have the honor of entertaining in my home. Of course you will understand," he ended anxiously for he had gone a little farther than he had really meant to go, "that the information which I have just imparted to you is of an exceedingly delicate and private nature."

The widow realizing that here was an opening such as she had long coveted, was about to take advantage of the opportunity thus offered to her, but was prevented from doing so by an interruption that could not immediately be set

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aside; she had carried out her plan so far as to draw very near to Mr. Ward, and had even laid one hand upon his arm, but just as she was about to speak, quick, light footsteps were heard rapidly approaching and a sweet, high-pitched voice called out:

“Another letter from James has just been brought to Mary by special messenger! Some strong influence has been exerted in his favor, so that he hopes soon to be released! Mary and I both believe” the girl continued animatedly and with great satisfaction, “that the young American officer who has thrice visited us has been instrumental in behalf of the one in whom we are all so much interested!” She stopped then and looked eagerly into the two faces, but seeing little sympathy there, her mood and the tones of her voice as well, suddenly changed. “I don’t see how you can be so indifferent,” she cried, “when you know perfectly well what awful dangers have been, and are even yet, surrounding the man whom my dear sister is to marry, and who is besides, in every way, honorable and lovable! Of course” she ended with sarcastic emphasis, “he is a patriotic American! That fact might be

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counted as a crime by those who are opposed to Washington and the glorious principles that he upholds!"

"Hoity toity Susan!" remonstrated her aunt, "You should be a little more particular in your choice of words. Such rashness may get you into trouble sometime. Public affairs in this country may not always be as loosely managed as they are now. Even your good looks" she ended gazing as severely as she could at the young woman's expressive countenance, "might not save you from disgrace or even in case you do not guard your tongue more carefully, from death itself."

"I would consider it to be a blessed privilege," the girl said earnestly and humbly, "if I should be permitted to serve my country so well that it would be necessary for me to lay my life down upon the altar that has already received so many lives that were far nobler and more useful than mine has ever been."

CHAPTER XIII

THE PREPARATIONS that were being made at Evergreen Hill for the reception of a distinguished guest, were small, and almost insignificant in comparison with other activities that were being carried on in anticipation of the coming of the same person; these activities were staged among the vessels of the British fleet, then at anchor off New York as well as among the English land forces at that time in America; many a jack tar secretly anathematized his own folly in selecting for himself the uncertain, and rigidly disciplined life of those who "go down to the sea in ships" as he holy-stoned the deck or clewed and trussed up the sails shortly before the arrival of this influential personage upon his own particular floating home. It would seem that the prospective visit was to be in the nature of a tour of inspection, and as such, was both dreaded and looked forward to; these opposing attitudes of mind were strikingly exemplified upon the estate of Mr. Ward as well as among those who

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were then under the restraints of naval and military discipline; Uncle Obediah and his dusky consort had had many altercations that had come about through their differences of opinion regarding the visitor, on whose account, they in common with the rest of those with whom they were associated, had been called upon to make strenuous, and it sometimes seemed to them unnecessary efforts. One morning, Aunt Dolly took such a decided stand, that her spouse felt it to be his duty to convince her that the grounds upon which she had been basing her arguments were not only shaky, but even altogether untenable.

“Look a yer Chile,” he began persuasively and almost coaxingly, “yo has been circumbobu-latin’ around’ ’twell yo has been so misfortunate as to run clear off de track en now yo is widout chart en widout compass”—the tones of his voice were getting to be decidedly lugubrious—“en widout log-book en widout anchor. . .”

How much farther along the line of tabulation the force of his eloquence would have carried him, can not now be determined, for his victim, who had been growing more and more restless under the evidence of his descriptive

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powers, suddenly broke away from the restraining influence that he had managed to throw around her, and demanded:

“What good is anchors en log-books en such contraptions on dry lan’ I’m askin’ yo ’Diah Ward?” he looked non-plussed, and she believing that as it were, she had taken the wind entirely out of his sails proceeded with quite a show of confidence to explicate her views, “What kin’ ob order would be superinducted into dis house if it did’n’t hab a head? En den yo Yankees” she spoke the word with withering scorn, and as if it removed all those to whom it could be applied very far away from herself, “seem ter tink dat you can run de whole libin’ caboodle ob everybody en not hab no mo’ dan one kin’ ob people! Ez if de good Lord Heself” she ended as it seemed to her convincingly, “would hab put a black skin on me en a white one on Miss Susan ef He had meant us ter be equal ter each other!”

“Now look a yer Niggah!” cried Uncle Obediah laying one of his huge black hands upon her ample shoulder, “Yo mus’ hab de idea in yo wooly haid dat yo can spotulate yo husban’ ’round’! Dat idea am not correc’ en I will

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amplicate ter yo der reason why it am not.” He stepped back then and stretching out his long muscular arms to their widest extent went on, “Yo needs a anchor, en yo needs a log-book, en a compass, en a chart, en a jib-boom” Aunt Dolly’s eyes were apparently getting larger and larger, “ en a halyard for yo am not on dry lan’ Niggah, yo am on de wides’ sea dat evah rolled!” the woman’s head began to droop and presently the great tears chased each other down her fat black cheeks, “But dar’s a ship, Honey,” Uncle Obediah ended cheerfully, “dat can sail dat sea en bring yo safe to shore. De name ob da ship am a gran’ en a noble name; it am a name dat will be talked about one ob dese yer days all ober de libin’ world’!” he raised his voice as if he were addressing a large audience and Uncle Obediah’s voice had mighty carrying powers, “It am a name Niggah,” he went on emphasizing his words with his ungainly hands, “dat will make de buzzin’ bats ob ignorition en superstance dat hab been cavortin’ ’run’ in de dark en doin’ all de harm dey could en nevah doin’ any good *hunt dere roosts.*” as he said the last words he shook one of his huge fists almost directly under his auditor’s nose who as

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if without her own volition drew back and looked defiantly at him, "De name ob dat ship Honey," he ended wheedlingly so that Aunt Dolly became once more intensely and tearfully interested, "am freedom. En dere am some" he added looking anxiously all about him and lowering his voice until he almost whispered, "who would be mighty glad ter wreck dat ship ter slam it on de rocks en knock it all ter pieces en one of dese yer piruts" he hissed this information directly in her ear, "will soon be yer en if I wasn't subdurate because my hide is black I nevah would exten' ter him a bit of hospitism!"

Aunt Dolly, for silence on her part usually meant acquiescence, agreed with almost all that had been said, at least as much of it as she had understood; whenever the language had gone beyond her limitations as to comprehension, she closed her eyes and kept them tightly shut until the words that she was listening to began again to have some meaning for her, and then she fixed her bright admiring gaze upon her husband's face for she was very proud of his ability as to the handling of words, even when she disagreed as very often happened with the thoughts that

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they expressed; she wished to know, however, a little more concerning one idea that had just been brought to her attention, and after a little while she suddenly and somewhat meekly asked:

“Who am gwine ter run dis ship? Who am gwine ter steer it straight en luff it by de win’ en keep it off de rocks?”

Uncle Obediah had been about to leave the room, but when he heard these questions he turned about, and closing the door that he had already opened carefully behind him, he hurriedly approached his consort and in a guarded but most emphatic tone of voice declared:

“De man who am ter guide dis ship am big en strong en good en kin’. He is de smartes’ en de grandes’ man dat evah lived but if he’d fin’ yo stumblin’ along de road some col’ dark night” Aunt Dolly shuddered at the very thought, “he’d be as kin’ to yo as if yo was de fines’ lady in de lan’. De man who am ter manage tings on dis ship de name ob which am freedom Honey,” he spoke impressively and almost solemnly, “am Washington . . . George Washington.”

The old negress had never beheld the high-minded leader of the American armies, but she

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was very much moved by the description that had just been given to her of him; she looked now searchingly and determinedly at her companion and announced:

“Yo en I’ll be ridin’ on dat good ol’ ship togeddah, ‘Diah; when it comes ter lan’ we’ll be dere side by side. No one’s gwine ter wreck dat ship” she went on fiercely, “lessen yo en me kain’t help ourselves. Piruts” she ended with bloodthirsty viciousness, “bettah be careful how dey circumtwistulate aroun’ yere! De firs’ thing dey know they might fin’ deirselves capacitated!”

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE morning of the actual arrival at Evergreen Hill of the expected guest, Mr. Ward met and warmly welcomed his distinguished visitor; then as soon as the latter was refreshed and rested, so that he no longer felt the fatigues of the journey that he had just made, his host, after having arranged matters in such a manner as to be as far as possible free from interruption and eavesdropping, entered into a conference with him, the nature of which was evidently very important, and certainly strictly private; the new-comer seemed to take the pronounced deference that was given to him altogether as a matter of course, and accepted the almost cringing attitude assumed toward him by Mr. Ward without a word of protest, and in fact, acted as if he had expected nothing less than the honor that was being paid to him; at the same time, although he must necessarily have been entirely unconscious of the belligerent attitude so lately and fiercely developed by Aunt Dolly, and fully shared by her husky

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spouse, he was constantly, and as it seemed from habit, watchfully on guard; he had a strong, even a powerful physique, and was apparently in perfect bodily health, and it would seem that under ordinary circumstances he would be able, unaided and alone, to successfully defend himself; but as it appeared, his circumstances were not according to any definition ever given of that word ordinary; they were so far removed from that state, that even under the conditions that now surrounded him, his manner, as well as that of his host, was so forced as to be strained, and his attitude toward his companion, in spite of an apparent attempt to be condescending on his part, gave him the appearance of being continually under restraint; and yet, Mr. Ward, as if from premeditated intention, as if in fact he had received positive instructions regarding the matter, was very careful not to use any title when he addressed him, simply prefixing plain Mr. to a name, that, from his lack of familiarity with it, was evidently not his own; at the beginning of his initial conference with his deferential host, he seemed to be particularly perturbed, and was so ill at ease, as to make it appear that something had very

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recently occurred to disturb his equanimity; after a few moments of silence, during which he seemed to be profoundly thinking, he suddenly and pointedly demanded:

“What information have you to give me regarding the probable movements of the French fleet now at anchor in Boston harbor, or concerning the plans of any of the insurgents who are at present in armed opposition to their rightful king?”

An embarrassed surprise that amounted almost to trepidation, took complete possession of Mr. Ward, so that, for a few tense and anxious moments, he was unable to make any reply, although it could be plainly seen that he very much desired to do so; at length, however, with what seemed to be an exceedingly painful effort, he managed to say:

“I deeply regret my inability to give you any definite information regarding the matter to which you have just referred” wincing under the frown that instantly appeared upon the face that he was regarding with a humble admiration that was akin to awe, “I have however,” he went on hastily, as if he hoped thus to do away with the frown and the memory of what

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had caused it to appear, "made some advancement along another line, in which, as I hope you will be interested." It seemed to him that an expression of pleased expectation was beginning to take the place of the frown. "Three times now, a young man, who is evidently an officer in the American army in disguise, has made me, here in my home, an unexpected and unsolicited visit; he is, as I believe, well informed regarding the position and condition of the revolutionary troops at all times, having been closely associated with the leader of them in some way last winter at Valley Forge." He had by this time gained the eager attention of his listener, and so proceeded with renewed courage, "he is a fine-looking, rather dashing young fellow, and yet he is so well-poised, and carries with him such an air of quiet authority, that he gives one the impression that he is well thought of, and respected, even looked up to, by the ones with whom he has cast in his lot."

"You say that he has been in close touch with Washington? Perhaps then," the visitor surmised, "he might have an appreciable influence upon the conduct of affairs; did you find out

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what was the nature of the association that he had had with the leader of the American armies?"

"Not exactly," replied Mr. Ward, glad to observe that the subject which he had introduced had aroused an interest in the mind of his guest, "at least not yet, but I have reason to believe," he went on animatedly, "that he will be very likely to call here again, in which case" he ended cheerfully, "I shall use my utmost endeavor to draw him out, and get all the information that it is possible for me to gain from him."

"Why do you expect him to come here again?" the visitor asked eyeing his host sharply and interrogatively if not suspiciously, "What bait have you thrown out to this presumptuous Yankee so that he will be apt to thrust his head again into what should be for him a veritable hornet's nest?"

"He has already," Mr. Ward admitted doubtfully, "managed to secure the friendship of each of my daughters, one of them being interested in him on his own account, and the other because of the assistance that he has given, and is yet likely to give to her lover who is, by-the-way" he ended as if the fact were a matter of

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small moment, "a prisoner of war in the hands of the royal army."

"What was the nature of the assistance," the guest inquired, "that as you say he has already given to this man who has been captured by our troops?"

"He rode in here one night only a short time ago," the other rather hesitatingly answered, "bringing with him a letter that had been written by this man, and was said to have been carried through the British lines by an American prisoner who was about to be exchanged."

"Has any further communication," the visitor excitedly demanded rising and beginning to pace with firm and rapid strides back and forth across the floor, "been received from this prisoner?"

The fatherhood of Mr. Ward, in spite of his ingrained cowardice and diplomatic submission to what he believed would be in the end the ruling power, revolted from the thought of using the confidential information that had been innocently revealed to him by his daughter, as a means to possibly bring to her even a more poignant sorrow than that under which she was

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then suffering; and yet, as he was exceedingly anxious to gain the approval of the one who had asked the question, he did not spend much time in reflecting upon the matter, and was about to reply in the affirmative, when in spite of all the precautions that he had so carefully taken in order to secure complete privacy, there was a resounding knock on the door of the room in which his guest and himself were then standing and almost in the same instant the sound of a ringing vibrant voice. Both men started and looked at each other anxiously, if not fearfully, and the visitor laid his hand on the hilt of the sword that had been swinging at his side as he walked; their suspense did not last long however, for the hand that had delivered the resounding knock pushed gently, but firmly, against the door until there was a crack between it and the frame in which it had been hung, so that in the opening that had thus been made, a laughing boyish face appeared as the ringing vibrant voice called out:

“Here I am as fine as a fiddle! Just out of the lion’s den! They didn’t raise my scalp, or change my name, or clip my wings, or brand me

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with a red-hot iron as a good-for-nothing Yankee. . ." then noticing for the first time that a stranger was present he ended, "I beg your pardon! Where are the girls?"

CHAPTER XV

AFTER having explained the nature of the interruption that had interfered with their conversation, Mr. Ward, concluding that an answer to the question that had so recently been put to him would not now be necessary, endeavored so far as possible, without offense, to turn the thoughts of his guest away from the subject, that was to him, a somewhat painful, and certainly a most unpleasant one; in order to accomplish this purpose, he began the discussion of affairs to which a more general interest was attached than to matters that pertained principally to what would immediately affect his own household.

“The fickle goddess who apportions the fortunes of war has been lately smiling upon us so continually, that as it seems to me, we must very soon see the end of this unnatural struggle.” He began tentatively, “the rebellious colonies as I know very well, are suffering more and more from depletion, both as to

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men and supplies." He went on hoping in this way to placate one who, as it appeared, was not in the best of humor, "of course" he ended confidently, "there can be no reasonable doubt as to the final outcome."

"The length of time however," declared the visitor who had thus far remained standing, but who now settled down comfortably in a spindle-legged shaky-looking, but really very stout and serviceable chair, thus allowing his host also to be seated, "that will be required before the guilty parties can be brought into complete submission, is still unfortunately indefinite. This young fellow now," he continued plunging directly into the subject that his companion wished heartily to avoid, "who has just been released from the custody of some of the loyal subjects of our king . . . what position did you say," looking fixedly and somewhat curiously at Mr. Ward, "he occupies with reference to your family?"

"My younger daughter," the other answered, realizing that in this instance the truth could not be avoided, "expects at some time not yet determined upon, to marry him. At least," for seeing the expression of consternation that was

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growing upon the face of his guest, he desired in some way to modify the statement he had made, "they have been lovers since their childhood; but," he ended thinking thus to alleviate the situation that was becoming more and more strained, "public affairs have already greatly disarranged their plans, and very possibly the march of events may finally turn them away from each other altogether."

"Nevertheless," his companion asserted relentlessly and emphatically, "at the present moment your daughter is the promised wife of a man who has been guilty, not only of taking up arms against his legitimate sovereign, but also of some grave misdemeanor that has necessitated his arrest and imprisonment; and at the same time, he chooses to regard the just and evidently inadequate punishment that was but the natural consequence of his wrong-doing, as a sort of huge and hilarious joke. It seems to me," he ended with some severity, "that it would be well for you to look to this matter carefully, and to attend to it in time to prevent some calamitous consequence, that might easily follow what is without doubt, a serious departure from the strict observance of the principles

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that as you yourself believe, are the proper ones to govern conduct."

"What you have just said is undoubtedly true." Mr. Ward acquiesced, accepting the reproof that had been administered to him with deep humility, "I must however, beg you to consider the peculiar position in which I am at present placed; were I to openly state my views concerning the way in which affairs are being conducted in the immediate vicinity of my own home, it is more than probable that I would from that time on, be unable to render even the slight assistance that is now within my power" looking deprecatingly and almost pleadingly into the face of his guest, "to those whose fealty to stable and established conditions is as firm and loyal as my own."

"Discretion and diplomacy are no doubt excellent qualities my friend," the visitor affirmed, leaning forward so that he rested one elbow on the table at his side, "I did not mean," he went on amicably and in almost a cajoling manner, "to criticize you harshly. I am well aware that it is utterly impossible for one person to fully understand another person's circumstances. It is very likely" he ended hopefully 'that you will

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be able to gain some valuable information from this ex-prisoner; for example, you might find out how he happened to obtain his release."

"I shall certainly avail myself of every opportunity that is offered to me," agreed his companion still steadfastly endeavoring to pacify, and if possible, please the stranger who was within his gates, "to even in an insignificant manner further the cause in which you and I are both so deeply interested."

"And now," the guest said briskly, as if the subject that had been under discussion had been thoroughly disposed of, "I would like to know a little more concerning this American officer who has been going about incognito. But first," he went on rising and going to the door which he carefully opened, and then gently closed, placing the blade of a penknife that he took from his pocket over the latch as he did so, "let us protect ourselves from another startling interruption while we talk. Did this fellow come here alone or was he accompanied, and if so, how?"

"Twice," began Mr. Ward glad to be able to speak plainly and without restraint, "he was alone and once at the head of a body of armed troops."

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“What occasioned,” inquired the other surprised out of the attitude of calm receptivity that he had assumed, “such a war-like display?”

“An unfortunate combination of circumstances,” his host answered, “made his coming in that manner very opportune; as you perhaps may know, the open country hereabouts is at times infested with roaming outlaws; one of a band of night-riders had secreted himself in the attic here, and in answer to a preconcerted signal, admitted his comrades; these ruffians were about to overrun the place, when the man of whom we are speaking, with those who followed him, surrounded the house, overpowering, killing and capturing the marauders.”

“He must have had some secret information,” surmised the guest speculatively, “You say he was the leader of the rescuing party; did they use any title such as would denote his rank when they addressed him?”

“If so, I do not know what it was.” Mr. Ward replied simply and truly. “They came up the driveway on horseback like a whirlwind and went away in the same wild fashion.”

“Were they well mounted?” the other asked

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as if moved by idle curiosity alone. "What sort of horse did the leader ride?"

Their horses were strong, well-fed and spirited," declared the host. "The one who led the others, rode as when he came alone, a very powerful and remarkably intelligent charger, evidently well-trained and accustomed to kindness and excellent care."

"You have not mentioned the color of this horse," said the visitor with unexpected eagerness, "What was it?"

"His color was what is commonly known as roan . . . a sort of mottled reddish cross between a bay and a brown, flecked with white." Mr. Ward gave this description glibly and unconcernedly, and was not prepared for the effect that it had upon his auditor, "Have you," he ended surprised and startled, "any information concerning such a mount?"

"If I had not heard that his well-known horse was killed at the battle of Germantown," declared the visitor, "I would suspect that your unknown guest was none other than the notorious General Anthony Wayne."

CHAPTER XVI

IT WAS not in the nature of the sly, resourceful widow to allow the visit of Mr. Ward's distinguished guest to terminate, without at least attempting to gain some personal advantage from it; accordingly, one day, when she was reasonably certain that the owner of Evergreen Hill would be busily engaged with a matter connected with the management of his estate that had suddenly demanded his immediate attention, she quietly, and without ostentation, entered the room from which she had just seen her brother-in-law emerge, evidently much perturbed because he was obliged to leave the society of his visitor; without preliminary introduction, and yet with pronounced courtesy, she after a few moment's hesitation began:

“I trust the arrangements that have been made for your comfort during your stay here are entirely satisfactory?” Then, as the attention of the one to whom she had addressed the remark, continued apparently to be absorbed in

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the contemplation of some entries that he had been making in a note-book, when she came into the room, she, in a somewhat louder tone of voice, went on, "I was saying Mr. Marclay, that I hope you are being well cared for here." As he still did not reply, she went a little nearer to him, and resting one hand upon the table beside which she sat, continued, "Mr. Marclay!" he started up when he heard this exclamation, but did not seem to realize that she was addressing him; however as he was looking up at her inquiringly, she proceeded; "Our accommodations here must seem very crude and primitive to you." Then as this still elicited no answer she added, "I am sorry that our circumstances make it impossible for us to make you more comfortable."

"I am very well provided for Madam," he said, being compelled on account of the training that he had received in polite society to say no less; then as the widow firmly stood her ground, refusing to remove her hungry gaze from his face, he added as if completely dismissing the subject, as well as the one who had presented it, "I shall not need anything further thank you."

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But the distinguished visitor had no conception of the tenacity of purpose that characterized Catharine Ward; she had a definite idea in mind, and she meant to elaborate it. Also she knew that she had very little time in which to do the work; seeing a stone-wall before her, she impetuously and with great dash and daring charged it:

“I have been thinking of something Mr. Marclay,” she began with however no appreciable result, “that as it seems to me might be of interest to you.” He glanced up then, but casually and unconcernedly. “At this present moment,” she went on unperturbed, in fact spurred on by his evident indifference, “there is under the same roof with you, a strong young man, who if made aware of your identity,” for the first time his facial expression lost its appearance of apathy, “would not hesitate to report your whereabouts to our enemies.” Thus neatly she placed herself with reference to him. “This young man has only recently been within the British lines, and delights in relating what he saw and heard there; he has a list of names of some of those who are noted in the English army; he was laughingly going over

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this list a few evenings since, denominating it as one of the relics of his incarceration, and jokingly describing what he thought the men were like as he came to the names that represented them." She was sure by this time that she had aroused his interest, and so she seated herself comfortably, although it is true without his invitation to do so. "At length he came to one name Sir," he started up and looked searchingly at her, "that I will not mention now," his relief was very evident, "but it is well-known among those who are the peers of him who bears it; if he had been looking directly at you Sir, he could not have given a more exact description of your appearance than he did then. But" she ended as if the matter were after all probably of no consequence, "since he has not met you here, there would of course be no danger of discovery through him. I thought however," she added deprecatingly, "that it was my duty to mention the matter to you."

"Is this young man now upon the premises?" demanded the one who had been addressed as Mr. Marclay, rising and drawing himself up to his full height, which was almost a commanding

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one, "If so see that he remains here until after my departure."

At that moment, Mr. Ward came bustling in, and the widow discreetly withdrew, without making any promises and without receiving any thanks for the information that she had brought.

"I am very sorry," the host announced, "that it was necessary for me to leave you. I hope" he went on anxiously, "that you have not been annoyed during my absence. Women are as you know, proverbially curious" evidently wishing to excuse whatever it was that may have happened, "and the fact that we have so few visitors here makes the advent of a stranger of unusual interest."

"What seem to be misfortunes are sometimes blessings well disguised," declared the guest speaking more genially than he had hitherto done, "I think" he went on cordially, "that you and I have now a thorough understanding as to future plans so that we can work intelligently together. And so," he ended gathering up and arranging carefully, certain papers that had been scattered about upon the table, and concealing them within an inside pocket of a plain, but elegant surtout that was hanging on a

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wooden peg that had been driven into the wall near to the chair that he had been occupying, "as it seems to me that nothing of importance can be gained by prolonging my stay here in your hospitable home, I believe that I will end my visit at once, returning however," he added relaxing his habitually stern expression of countenance so that he smiled affably, "from time to time as exigencies may present themselves."

"There is though, one matter," said Mr. Ward hesitatingly, "that we have not yet discussed concerning which I wish very much to solicit your advice; it is something that closely affects my future happiness, as well as that of my daughters; it is an extremely delicate subject, and it may be that you will not wish to make any statement with regard to it, especially as you may not consider my position in life to be of sufficient importance to warrant you in doing so; however, since the opportunity of laying the matter before you has been offered to me, I would deem myself to be neglectful if I did not take advantage of it; I hope that you will not think that I am presumptuous, for I do not mean to be so, but I am urged on by a sense of duty

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toward those who are dependent upon me; I wish to ask you," he ended looking earnestly and almost pleadingly into the face of the other man, "whether you think it is wise for me to continue to live here upon this estate, or whether I should for my own safety, and that of my family, abandon my home here and either repair immediately to one of the large American towns or go at once to England?"

The distinguished visitor looked at his host as if he were — figuratively speaking — taking his measure; for some little time he was silent, but finally slowly and deliberately he said:

"You are asking me if I think that a disorganized mob of revolutionists, can eventually defeat and drive away the trained and hitherto invariably triumphant hosts, that represent the strongest, grandest, wisest and most worthy nation in the world!"

CHAPTER XVII

HAD THE honored guest of Mr. Ward seen the little group that was closely watching him when he went away from Evergreen Hill, he might have gone forward with less confidence. It does not seem probable however, that he would have been more cautious than he actually was, even had he been aware of the fact that he was under the constant surveillance of an active and alert young patriot who was quietly following him, and that the latter in turn was also followed at a safe distance by one whose feet were shod as if with velvet, so that they carried their owner along over the ground noiselessly; the one who was in advance of the others, moved with such deliberation, that an onlooker might have concluded that he was without fear with regard to anything that might be behind him, while at the same time, he was exceedingly wary concerning what might be before him. This lack of haste on his part, made it necessary for the others either to follow his example, or to actually come up

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with him; they pursued the former tactics for some little time, but at length, as if no longer able to restrain their impatience, they began to gain upon him, and finally they were so near to him, that had he suddenly looked around upon the road over which he had just passed, he might have descried a tall, slender young man, wearing a mismatched, rather clumsily arranged homespun suit, heavy leggins and stout shoes, with his face partially concealed by the wide brim of a dark slouched hat, riding easily, and as if well-accustomed to the saddle, a mettlesome but well-trained black horse. Behind this figure on horseback, he might, had he looked sharply, have discerned what might have seemed to him at the first glance, to be more like an apparition than a living, breathing form, possessed of flesh and blood, moving like a shadow, silently and speedily from tree to tree, and from bush to bush, always advancing steadily, although often circuitously, changing all at once from a walk so slow that movement was almost imperceptible, to a sort of loping run of almost incredible swiftness, so that the two followers of the one whom the widow had addressed as Mr. Marclay, were sometimes some little distance

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apart from, and sometimes abreast of each other; but the one whom they were following was apparently entirely unconscious of their nearness, and for that matter, of the fact that they were in pursuit of him at all; he was evidently completely absorbed in the thoughtful consideration of matters that were to him of great importance, and was to some extent, unmindful of his immediate surroundings.

He, however, did not fail to often glance from side to side, and keenly scurtinize the road over which he intended to pass; this watchfulness was emphasized whenever there was any sudden sound in the vicinity; the snapping of twigs, or the rustling of dried leaves, as tiny woodland creatures scurried away before the approach of man, as well as the breaking and falling of branches, that, weakened by decay, were unable to resist the sudden onslaught of an unusually stiff breeze, startled and greatly annoyed him; the wailing cry of the wind, as it soughed among the tops of the tall trees that were a part of the virgin forest, was clear and distinct in the midst of the profound stillness of primeval nature; the chattering of squirrels and chipmunks, as they scuttled from one leafy retreat to another,

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the scream of the puma, and the voices of myriads of birds, singing, calling and conversing, were not hushed or even rendered inaudible as they have often lately been by the thunderous roar of railroad trains, and the discordant noises that are made by the whistling, snorting, puffing, grunting and shrieking of almost numberless engines; instead, they were magnified, and very often many times repeated by the reverberating echoes that went rolling back and forth among the hills, and were reflected from the giant palisades and mighty rocks, between which the noble Hudson river makes its resistless way.

The three who were upon that day traveling in the same direction, two of them upon, and the third one very close beside the corduroy road represented in fact were splendid examples of distinctly different types; the so-called Mr. Marclay was a well-poised, well-trained, finely educated, courteous English gentleman who was firmly grounded in his own opinions, and felt that every other intelligent person would, if properly enlightened, share them. James Fenimore, who was close behind him, was typical of the hardy, philosophical,

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ingenious and cheery American pioneer; the men who deliberately went out into the western wilderness, were equal to any emergency, cool in the presence of unexpected and blood-curdling danger, possessed of an unfailing fund of cheery, wholesome, mirth-provoking humor, not vindictive, and yet stern and unbending when it was necessary for them to be so, absolutely trustworthy, helpful friends and bitter unrelenting foes. The one who followed after the young patriot, was his understanding comrade in the enterprise upon which they were then engaged, as he had been upon many other occasions, when the work that was to be undertaken, seemed to require the exercise of his peculiar talents, and the display of his unusual empiric skill; Storm Cloud was a splendid specimen, an honorable and a highly honored scion of a tribe of aboriginal Americans, then fast disappearing, and now nearly extinct; the Mohegans or Mohicans, have been fully, graphically and dramatically placed before the reading public by a noted American author, but even his extraordinary exact and prolific descriptive powers would have been taxed to their utmost, had he known and attempted to faithfully pic-

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ture the Indian, who was then gliding gracefully, but at the same time rapidly, and with certainty, parallel to, and never far from, the one who was temporarily his leader and director. As they drew nearer to their quarry, each man in his own way resembled some lithe woodland creature, that was about to spring upon its prey; the white man's muscles became taut, and the expression of his face grew tense and eager, while his companion concealed, even more carefully, than he had done before, every hint of his own personal feeling, so that his face was as devoid of all expression, as if it had been but a senseless mask; in his large black eyes however, there dwelt a hidden fire, that occasionally, as if in spite of his determined stoicism, sent forth a baleful gleam, like a flaming light that is about to be extinguished, that just before it disappears, shoots up, and is brighter and more brilliant, than it has ever previously been; when they were almost abreast of the one whom they were pursuing, the young leader raised the first finger of one of his hands, and held it at a right angle against the back of the other one. This was evidently a signal that was perfectly understood by his accomplice, for the Indian at

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once swerved from the direction in which he had been going, and swiftly and silently drew off to one side, until he was at some little distance from, and a little ahead of his companion; then, as if he had been a statue carved out of insensate marble, he stood still, keeping his keen gaze riveted upon the face of his comrade, as if waiting for another cue. He had not long to wait, for when the Englishman, who was about to descend a slight declivity that led into a little hollow or gully, was directly opposite to him, the leader of the little expedition suddenly raised his right hand with the palm uppermost, and then, moving it rapidly, as if he were making a circle in the air, closed it with a quick jerk; almost at the same instant, he urged his horse forward, using a spur that stuck out behind the heel of one of his shoes, so that he was beside the one whom he had been stalking; the Indian with great celerity, and yet without any appearance of haste, rushed to the head of the horse that the Englishman was riding, and taking holding of the leather thongs or straps that on either side of the animal's head held the bit in its mouth, clutched them firmly, lowering his head and ducking down so that he was almost

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invisible to the one who was upon the creature's back; at the same moment, his comrade leveled a musket at the other white man's breast and called out:

“Halt! You are my prisoner!”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ENGLISHMAN looked calmly into the muzzle of the weapon that was pointed at his breast, and then allowed his gaze to rest an instant upon the hands that held the musket, after which, he stared as if he had been fascinated into the steady eyes that were behind it; realizing that although the reins were laying loosely upon the pommel of the saddle, for he had raised his hands in token of surrender, his horse was being forcibly restrained, he looked about him to discover the confederate of the man who had him covered, but seeing no one, for Storm Cloud was crouching then almost beneath the creature that he held, he tried to make his mount leap forward, by plunging the sharp and cruel spurs he wore into his side, hoping in this manner to make his own escape; for he at once decided, that it would be better for him to risk sustaining the wound that might be made by the single bullet that probably was in the gun, into the muzzle of which he had just looked, than it would be to be

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conducted along with the papers that he carried, into the camp of those whom he chose to call insurgents; for he believed that before his captor could reload the weapon that he carried, he would be far enough away to avoid suffering from the impact of a second bullet. But, as may be surmised, the effort that he made was entirely without result, except to torture the animal, upon the back of which he sat, for although the poor creature tried to bound ahead in obedience to the mandate of the spur, the iron grip that held him did not yield an inch, and so he stood there, trembling and perspiring from fright, as well as pain. Seeing the uselessness of further struggling against what seemed to be fate, and wishing to ameliorate his situation as much as it was possible for him to do, he looked frankly, and even pleasantly, into James Fenimore's clear and unusually serious blue eyes and inquired:

“Well my fine Highwayman, what is it that you want of me?”

“I do not want your money,” smiled his captor, “and I do not want your life, but I do want every scrap of paper that you may have about you, and in order to make sure,” he went

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on, signaling to Storm Cloud who instantly appeared, "that we do not overlook anything of value in that line, I will ask you," bowing politely if at the same time a little mockingly, "to retire for a short time from the public highway."

Crooking the little finger of his left hand that was holding up the barrel of his musket, so that the end of it almost touched the palm of the hand of which it was a part, the young man, still keeping his captive covered, guided his horse by the pressure of his knees, so that he fell in behind, and followed the animal that the Englishman bestrode. The Indian, as soon as he had received the message that had been conveyed to him by the little finger of James Fenimore's left hand, seized the bridle of the horse that he had recently been holding, and led it, and of necessity its rider also, into the little gully near which the latter had been captured, and after passing through this hollow, into a small copse or glade that was surrounded by underbrush and bushes, and carpeted thickly with dried leaves that had fallen from the tall trees that overshadowed it. Here the captive was compelled, though much against his will, to

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divest himself not only of his outer garments, but also of everything else that he was wearing, so that when Storm Cloud had completed the work that he had been told to do, he stood there before them as naked as when he had made his initial appearance upon the stage where mortal men and women but only for a season play their parts; although it did not seem very likely that he, clothed as he was then, would try to make his escape, the young patriot did not relax his vigilance, but directed the Indian to carefully go over the garments that were laying in a pile upon the ground, and take from them everything that he could find about them that could be removed. In a short time, the native American had gathered quite a lot of trinkets of one kind and another; some of these objects looked very strange to him, and with others he was quite familiar; he laid a brace of loaded pistols, and a sword with its belt and scabbard, carefully, almost reverently down at some little distance from their owner, glancing searchingly at the latter, as if he half suspected that even in the nude condition to which he had reduced him, he might suddenly make a rush for them, in spite of the fact that in case he did so, his

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unprotected person would be very apt to come in contact with a bullet from the gun, that supported by steady hands, was still trained upon him; he collected all the papers that he found, handling them gingerly and feeling evidently a superstitious awe with regard to what the marks upon them might signify, and placed them in a neat little pile very near to his fellow-conspirator.

At length, having as it seemed to him, completed the work, in the performance of which he had been constantly, and to the on-looker mysteriously directed by his comrade, he assumed his characteristic attitude of statue-like repose and waited for further suggestions. Then obeying a signal that his principal had given to him, he took the former's place as guard, pointing his own musket of which, as an observer would have noticed, he was very fond and proud, directly at the spot beneath which as he imagined the prisoner's heart was located. Thus relieved, his companion thoroughly examined the papers that had been taken from the captive's garments, selecting from among them those that he wished to retain, and hastily concealing them; after this, the prisoner was

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allowed to resume his wearing apparel, which he did with alacrity, consuming while doing so, considerably less time than he would have used had he been in his home in England in charge of his own capable and experienced valet. When he was once more properly clothed, he was permitted to mount his horse, that the Indian had picketed while it had been without its rider, and told to return to the public highway; this he very gladly proceeded to do, and was quietly followed by the two who, through their interference, had disarranged some of his plans; Storm Cloud picked up the weapons that he had recently taken from their owner, carefully, but with perfect confidence, looking them over curiously as he did so, and carried them along, as if through pre-arrangement falling in silently behind his comrade. Just as the Englishman reached the corduroy road, James Fenimore, leaning forward in his saddle, and touching him on the shoulder with the point of his own naked sword that he had withdrawn from its scabbard after having signaled the Indian to again act as guard, said:

“You now have an adventure with western highwaymen to add to the list of your American

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experiences." Then as the one whom he was addressing evidently startled, but still self-contained, regarded him in silence, he went on, "If I find that any of your papers now in my possession contain only what is strictly of private importance, I will return them to you, for, although you are not apparently aware of the fact, the secret service of the United States of America is quite efficiently managed." Then returning his sword to its scabbard, and handing it with the brace of pistols to its owner, he added, "The rules of polite society are not always implicitly obeyed in the forest but human nature is very much the same wherever it is found."

CHAPTER XIX

CATHARINE WARD spent considerable time in casting about in her own mind, various possibilities concerning the safety of her brother-in-law's distinguished guest, immediately after he had departed from Evergreen Hill; she endeavored to find out the whereabouts of James Fenimore, soon after the conclusion of the conference that she had insisted upon having with the so-called Mr. Marclay, but failing in this, she was unable to obey the command that she had received from that gentleman; she began to speculate as to the likelihood of the young American's absence being in any way connected with the Englishman's going. Finally, her curiosity concerning the matter became so great, that she could no longer, or so it seemed to her, keep it within the bounds of her own individuality; accordingly, she sought out the head of the household and emphatically, even excitedly said:

“I believe that there has been underhanded work going on here! For all *I* know,” she

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continued, determined to arouse his interest at any cost, "you and I may have been parties to robbery or for that matter," desperately, "to murder!"

She had succeeded in accomplishing her object, for there was no doubt that Mr. Ward was both surprised and shocked; his face expressed amazement, that bordered closely upon horror; for once the widow had attracted his absorbed attention to herself:

"Catharine!" he cried, "Explain the meaning of your words! What has happened?"

"Well . . ." she started out loath to lose the advantage she had gained, "to begin with . . . James Fenimore is nowhere to be found! And" she continued dissipating the puzzled look that had been growing upon the countenance of her auditor, "he knew Mr. Marclay's real name; he had it listed with other names, and when he came to it, in describing its owner, he drew a word-picture that represented no one else except the actual owner of the name; I don't suppose," she ended conclusively, watching Mr. Ward's face, upon which, much to her satisfaction, an expression of fear was beginning to appear, "that he met Mr. Marclay during his

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visit, but he might have caught a glimpse of him somehow."

The habitual caution of the one to whom she had voiced her suspicions, restrained him from confirming them, by mentioning to her the significant incident that had accompanied the younger man's recent arrival; at the same time, he himself was very conscious of the possible connection that this incident may have had with his sudden, and unexplained departure; he therefor decided to ferret out, as far as he could, the reasons that had been given in explanation of the young man's movements. In order to pursue his proposed investigations, at least with any degree of secrecy, he knew that he must manage in some way to rid himself of the companionship of the energetic, but sometimes headstrong and impolitic widow; accordingly, after a few moments of self-communion, during which his companion eyed him sharply, he gently, fearfully, almost pleadingly began:

"I trust that nothing serious has happened," then with more composure than he had exhibited at first, he went on; "It is not likely that James Fenimore's absence is in any way connected with Mr. Marclay; it is more than

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probable that he has been hastily recalled by his commanding officer; I understood that the furlough, granted to him so that he might visit his fiancé after his recent imprisonment, was to be of short duration; nervous fears," he ended soothingly, "sometimes magnify into hydra-headed horrors, what should really cause very slight mental disturbance."

"You know," argued the undaunted widow, "that James Fenimore is a fiery revolutionist if there ever was one, and that the capture of a man who is as highly honored and note-worthy as Mr. Marclay, would be a fine feather in his cap."

"It might well be so," Mr. Ward admitted, "but," he went on confidently, "the man who who has just honored me by being a guest in my home, is abundantly able to defend himself; he was well-mounted, and well-armed when he left here, he has a splendid physique, and thoroughly understands the handling of all the weapons that are now in use. However" he ended hoping in this manner to mollify, and at the same time, dismiss his brother's widow, "I am very grateful to you for the keen interest that you have taken in this matter. It is no

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more though than was to be expected from one who entertains your well-known views."

She looked at him appraisingly for a few tense moments, and then she suddenly and explosively declared:

"If you haven't the courage to look into this thing, *I* have! It is not a time for idle vapourings and speculation! While you are enumerating the reasons why immediate action is not necessary, Mr. Marclay may be enduring unimagined tortures, untold indignities!" she went on, giving free range to her prolific imagination, "may be heaped upon him, for as you know well," she ended as if to prove the feasibility of all of her statements at one time, "our young friend is hand and glove with some who have no ideas of etiquette, or of polite and proper personal demeanor, but who are very familiar," shudderingly, "with tomahawks and scalping knives!"

"I shall do everything that is safely within my power," her companion assured her, "to protect the interests, as well as the person, of one whom we both," she relaxed a little the severity of her mien when she heard this deprecating hint at comradeship, "delight to honor

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but," he ended, for seeing that she was determined to take a hand in the affair, he had decided that she would do less harm if kept under surveillance, than if allowed to follow her own devices, "we must use every possible precaution to avoid adding to, instead of lessening his danger."

As soon as she realized that she was thus, even partially, taken into partnership, the resourceful widow began to make plans for future action; her first idea was to hunt up her younger niece, and browbeat her into telling her all that she knew about the intentions of her lover, but upon second thought, she decided that such a proceeding might not only be fruitless, but even disastrous, as she had learned from experience, that Mary's patriotism was pronounced. Also, while she had never to her knowledge been rude to him, she knew that the girl did not share her own superlative admiration for the one whom she desired to safeguard; while the thought of quizzing the servants appealed to her to some extent, yet the prospect that this idea presented was not a very hopeful one, as she knew that they would not be apt to know much, beyond the fact that the young man had mounted his horse,

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and ridden away in a certain direction; her curiosity had been too strongly aroused however, to admit of entire abandonment of the search for the information that she had started out to gain, and she was about to leave the room in pursuance of her original idea with regard to Mary, when the latter's father unexpectedly announced:

“There is one method of procedure Catharine, that you I presume have not considered.” Then looking directly into her startled eyes he continued, “as soon as darkness has set in I will know whether or not Mr. Marclay has arrived at the destination that he hoped to reach to-night. There are those who are now journeying upon the road over which he intended to pass, who will, at certain intervals, send up lighted signals; these signals will be repeated by those who understand their meaning until at last, one will be sent up that will be within the range of my vision, so that I from my own window here will be apprised of the facts in the case.”

CHAPTER XX

THE PERSISTENT and intensely interested widow managed to be near enough to her brother-in-law at dusk that day, to see, with her own eyes, a flaming light shoot up, so that it showed above the tree-tops and then again and yet again; the smile of satisfaction that appeared up on the face of Mr. Ward when the first flaming signal was sent up still hovered there until after the second one was seen, but when the third light shot above the tree-tops, his face took on a ghastly greenish hue as if the blood had all at once receded from it, as if he had received a shock that had shaken his entire being; his companion looked at him commiseratingly, but the chief feeling that she felt and plainly showed, was that of keen consuming curiosity; at length, unable as it seemed to her to contain, or least conceal her anxiety any longer, she laid one hand upon his arm and with great agitation, asked:

“What has happened? Is he safe?”

“He reached his destination,” Mr. Ward

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answered sadly, "but that for which he risked his life in coming here did not arrive with him."

"Then he *was* waylaid!" the widow cried excitedly, and she added with great enthusiasm, "If James Fenimore comes back here, we may be able to recover what he evidently took from him!"

But her companion with bowed head and serious mien discouragingly replied:

"Without doubt he had confederates. That of which he robbed him may be well on its way toward American headquarters by this time."

An unmistakable sound that was made by a strong and agile horse that was evidently galloping gaily up the driveway was at that moment distinctly audible; both of the listeners started eagerly forward, but settled back disappointedly, for, instead of the voice that they had been expecting to hear another less familiar one called out:

"The top of the evening to you all!" adding in answer to Uncle Obediah's gruff, yet friendly challenge, "Courtney Monahan hale and hearty, armed and ready at your service!"

With her suspicions whetted by what she had just been told concerning the fate of Mr.

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Marclay, Catharine Ward descended the broad stairway leading to the lower part of the house, intent upon gaining all the information that she could from the apparently frank and always courteous conversation of the new arrival; as she entered the large and commodious room in which the family usually spent their evenings together, her elder niece was standing in the middle of it talking animatedly to the young American officer; the girl's heightened color as well as the pleased surprise that permeated the tones of her voice, proclaimed the sincerity of the welcome that she had just been extending to him; as her aunt came within hearing distance Susan was saying:

“I am very glad to know that. Mary will be very grateful for the news; I will call her, so that she may hear the account from your own lips.” As she said the words, a wave of color swept across her already rosy face, and seeing her aunt she ended, “I always enjoy hearing of any good fortune that has come to our cause.”

As soon as she had gone in quest of her sister, the older woman took advantage of the opportunity thus offered to her, and inviting the young man to be seated, picked up some un-

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finished work that had been placed conveniently near, and sitting down not far from the visitor with her sewing in her hands, inquired:

“May I be enlightened as to this pleasing information that is now in your possession? I suppose,” she went on without waiting for an answer, “that it has something to do with Mary’s lover . . . have you seen him lately?”

“I just now met a friend of his,” replied the guest with easy frankness, “He commissioned me to bring a message to Miss Mary which I can assure you,” he ended smiling most engagingly, “I was very glad to do.”

“Did he say that you should tell her,” she asked him leaning forward and lowering her voice so that she almost hissed the words at him, “that he had been committing highway robbery?”

He stared at her in wonder for a moment, and then his hearty boyish laughter filled the room with merry sound; after awhile he managed to command his voice sufficiently to say:

“You have misnamed the work that he has done, for,” he went on bowing gracefully to her, “it is evident that you have had some very recent secret information or,” looking quizzically

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directly at her, "you have been doing some remarkably correct guess-work. But" he ended, "however that may be, the work that as you believe James Fenimore has just been doing was not highway robbery, but instead it was a very delicate and eminently successful bit of military diplomacy."

At that moment, the two sisters with their arms affectionately about each other's waists, appeared at the door, and standing there for a brief instant, looked calmly at the two who were within the room; then Mary, moving forward in advance of the other girl, extended her hand in cordial greeting to the visitor as she delightedly said:

"Susan has just told me that you are as usual the bearer of good news. I don't know how" she went on eagerly, "to thank you for the message you have brought. It wonderfully relieves my great anxiety to know that he is safe, and at the same time," she ended gleefully, "he has accomplished that for which he voluntarily incurred great danger. But how," she inquired as if from afterthought, "did you receive this message?"

"There are ways," the young man smilingly

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assured her, rising and placing chairs for the two girls, being careful to see that Susan was seated quite near to himself, "that are to the uninitiated quite mysterious, through which, those who have a thorough mutual understanding can communicate with each other." Susan looked up then and smiled at him so charmingly, that, although against his will, a quick flush spread itself over his sensitive features; seeing this, the widow was about to speak, but the young man hastily forestalled her: "Circumstances," he ended earnestly, even seriously, "often compel one to make complicated arrangements, that under other conditions, would not be even thought of, as well as to forego much that presents most alluring possibilities."

He sighed then deeply, and looking down, seemed lost entirely in reminiscent or imaginative thought; the girl however, was utterly unconscious of any hidden meaning in the words that he had used, and brightly, happily, almost gayly said:

"Circumstances, even though they may not always be happy ones, often bring two people together who would not otherwise have met."

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She hesitated then and seemed about to stop, but after a moment, as if she had plucked up fresh courage, went bravely on, "I believe that if two people, even though they have been placed in different, widely separated worlds, were meant to meet and know each other, they would do so in spite of everything that would interfere with, or come between them. Of course" she ended, "they might have to overcome many difficulties, and to endure much suffering, but their happiness" buoyantly and positively, "would be all the greater and more satisfying on that account."

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN THE young American officer rode away from Evergreen Hill the next morning, his bridle-reins were hanging loosely from the pommel of his saddle upon which his left hand idly rested; it was not until after he had actually set out upon the corduroy road, that he shook himself, sat erect, picked up the reins, and became again at once, at least to all appearances, the eager, active, alert, capable and dependable patriot that he had seemed to be before he first visited the estate of Susan Ward's father; he was however, evidently for some time deeply engaged in some engrossing thought, for although he constantly watched and listened, it could be plainly seen that the anxiety thus displayed, was almost altogether external, and in fact, was due more to the habitual caution that he had learned from past experience, than to any foreboding fear that he might feel concerning his immediate future; finally, as if in need of understanding

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companionship, he leaned forward and spoke almost directly into the ear of his gallant charger :

“Roan old Fellow,” he began, patting the powerful neck of the horse, and straightening out the heavy rather tangled mane that had become somewhat disordered through the frequent tossings of his head, “we have been in some pretty ticklish places together, but I don’t believe that you ever carried me into a more delicately dangerous, or it sometimes seems, a more uncertain situation than when you took me in between the big stone pillars that guard the entrance to the driveway, at the top of which, we two once found a rustic seat.” Then as if the little talk had done him good, he further unburdened his mind by continuing to confide in his willing listener. “She has a sweet face, Roan,” he smiled a little sadly at the memory of it, “her skin must be as soft,” his eyes were nearly closed as if what he was looking at, was not with human vision, “as is the down upon the surface of a ripe and luscious peach. There is something about her clear blue eyes, Roan,” he went on looking far beyond the road upon which they were then traveling, “when she glances up at one a little startled,

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and then suddenly looks down, that I can not fully describe even to you but it somehow. . .” dreamily, “somehow . . .” and then he sat a little straighter in his saddle than he had done before, and changed the subject altogether. “How much do you remember, Boy, of the things that you have done?” he asked and the big horse lifted his feet a little higher and pranced along a little more proudly because of the pointedly personal tone that had crept into his rider’s voice, “It seems to me” he went on positively, “that you must recall and sometimes ponder over the fate of the poor fellow whom I put upon your back who bled to death while you were carrying him as carefully as you could back to the surgeons at the camp. I know his helpless weight must have sagged down upon you awfully, and his dying groans must have sounded very deep and hollow to you, but you knew just what I wanted you to do, and so you did it, although it turned out to be harder for you than we thought that it would be, and you did it well; you always do your part, Roan, and sometimes you assist me most materially in doing mine; a great many horses know their own bridles, and some of them seem to hunt the bit

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when it is offered to them, but very few will find their bridles and take them to their riders when it is time to put them on! Ah!" he ended affectionately, "many's the time that I have felt your soft warm nose against my cheek just as the day was breaking, telling me that it was time for us to rise, and make ourselves ready, so that we might spend one more earthly day in struggling for the cause of freedom and of right! And I hope . . . I trust . . ." he added reverently, "that we may fight together for that cause until it is victorious!"

At that moment, the horse twisted his neck around, and pushed his nose gently but insistently against his rider's knee; even while the latter's hand smoothed out from habit, the heavy lock of hair, or foretop, that, starting between the animal's furry ears hung down upon his broad kind face, he knew that the creature's instinct always quicker and very often much more certain than is the wisdom that is ordinarily given to mortals, had warned him that they two were no longer entirely alone, but that there was some other presence near to them; instantly the young man took the hint that had been plainly given to him, and knowing

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from the actions of the horse that whatever it was that was approaching, was coming from the direction in which they themselves were going, he backed his mount into a convenient little shady hollow that happened to be near, and with one hand on his sabre-hilt, and the other on Roan's neck to steady him, waited for developments.

They had proceeded for some little distance along the road by this time, and he knew that there was no residence near to them; his familiarity with woodcraft, together with the intimate acquaintance that he enjoyed with his horse, told him that what he had to guard against, was not some fierce carnivorous creature searching for its natural food, but probably some other human being; however whether this person would prove to be a stanch, reliable, perhaps a well-know friend, or an implacable, possibly a bitter and blood-thirsty enemy, he had no means of knowing; hence he waited, quietly and warily for what might come. After awhile, he began to hear the slow, steady steps of a horse as they struck from time to time against the logs that formed the foundation of the corduroy road; it was not until he heard the

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creaking of saddle-leather, that he tightened his bridle-reins, and drew his sabre or short sword from its scabbard; thus prepared for any emergency, he listened eagerly, and fixed his gaze keenly upon the spot where, as it seemed to him, he would catch the first glimpse of the unknown horse and rider; suddenly, he heard a sound that was to him unmistakable evidence as to the character of the newcomer; it seemed to him that he could almost see a pair of boyish, pioneer, American lips pursed up to make the sound that he was listening to; the low, gentle but insistent whistle that proceeded and surrounded the one who was upon that early Autumn day drawing near to the two who were concealed beside the road, was rollicking and free full of the joy of the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness; and yet, as in those troublous times no man could really know his nearest neighbor, unless he actually beheld him, he did not relax his vigilance, until he saw the head of the horse upon which the one who was still whistling was mounted. The housing of the animal's accoutrements was without doubt the same that was then used by the patriotic army, but although much assured by this fact, as well as by the sound that

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he had heard, the caution that he had learned through the varied vicissitudes that he had undergone reminded him of many possibilities, and he maintained the attitude of watchful waiting that he had at first assumed, until the slow and easy progress of the other mounted man brought him within the range of his own vision, then instantly, he started forward, putting away the naked weapon that he had thus far held as he advanced; the other rider stopped, and stood stock still, astonished it is true, and yet so far from frightened, that his gay and careless whistling seemed to trail off into words.

“Hello there, Brother!” he called out, “Hello there! I wasn’t looking for an ambushment in broad daylight! Why didn’t you tell me” he adjured his horse, “that someone was in hiding here?” and then holding out his right hand cordially and frankly he added, “I am James Fenimore bound for Evergreen Hill . . . and you?”

“I am just returning from that most delightful and secluded spot, to which you say that you are going, and I have very recently had the honor to be the bearer of a message from you to

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Miss Mary Ward. I hope” he ended politely and yet earnestly, “that you will find all the members of the family in as good health and spirits as they were when I last saw them.”

CHAPTER XXII

WITHOUT further incident, that was at least of any great importance, the young patriot reached his sweetheart's home and remembering the errand upon which he had been when he last went away, a smile of satisfaction lighted up his speaking countenance as while riding slowly up the driveway he caught a glimpse of the substantial figure of Mrs. Catharine Ward; the widow had evidently just come from Uncle Obediah's cottage:

"She has no doubt" reflected the young man, watching her as she bustled up to, and then away from the old darkey, who was standing in the doorway of his home, "been laying down the law to him about something or other. The poor old chap looks bothered to death! I wonder what she's pitching into him about!"

As he drew near the pair in whom he was for the moment interested, he noticed that Mrs. Ward had something in her hands which as it seemed she shook from time to time beneath

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old Uncle 'Diah's unobtrusive nose; the expression of the poor old fellow's face was growing more and more pitiful and helpless, and he held his huge hands up imploringly as if to ward off something that was like a blow to him; occasionally he tried to speak, evidently in his own defense, but whenever he opened his mouth, she said something sharp to him that shut it up again at once; as the young man came within ear-shot, she had been applying one of these verbal extinguishers to the flame of the old servant's spirit that had just been trying to flash up and he heard her peroration:

“This is a *pretty* kettle of fish!” she was saying, “It's a pity if I can't turn my back without having something like this happen! Here I thought I had everything arranged in perfect order so that Mr. Marclay would be just as comfortable as a man like him *could* be under circumstances that are so different than those to which he has always been accustomed! And you” she shook whatever it was that she had in her hands under his nose again, “go around like old blunderbuss and get everything all mixed up! The idea of your *daring* to interfere with any of my plans! Do you know what I am going

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to do with you if anything like this ever happens again?" she screamed, snarling the words right into his face which under her ministrations had changed so that instead of being black as it had formerly been it was then of a dull purplish color, "I am going to have you *sold!* And not to anyone who lives near here either! As long as I have anything to say about how affairs shall be conducted here. . ."

But by this time, the young man was very near, and as Uncle Obediah looking up silently appealed to him, he, without fully realizing what he was bringing on himself, began to take his part:

"I don't believe that Mr. Ward would sell him no matter who would want him to do so. He has been in the family too long for anything like that to happen. Why" he ended hoping in this way to assist in making everybody happy again, "when Mary and I are married we expect of course to have Uncle Obediah and Aunt Dolly at our wedding. It wouldn't seem much like home here without them."

Up to this time he had been looking at the one whom he was trying blindly to defend, but then he glanced toward the widow, and all at

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once he saw what it was that she was holding in her hands, and almost precisely at the same moment he knew that he was going to be obliged to laugh, no matter what the consequences would be or for that matter on whose head they might fall. He tried to restrain his mirth, but even as he did so, he knew that he was going to fail, and so he threw his head back and let laughter have its way with him; for some time then he saw nothing because his eyes were either tightly closed or filled with merry tears that blinded them and he heard nothing except his own uproarious laughter; when his mirth had spent itself somewhat, so that he once again had full possession of his senses, he tried to ask the widow with politeness what she called the object that she was still holding in her hands; but then, before she answered him, indeed before he knew himself that it was coming on, another wave of mirth swept over him, for he remembered that only once before in all his life had he beheld an object that was similar to the one that she had just been shaking under Uncle 'Diah's nose and the circumstances under which he had beheld it had been so peculiar, that in spite of everything that he could do, he began to laugh again; but

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Catharine Ward had had quite enough of his hilarity and so directing her remarks at him alone, she said:

“Because you are a clown, and do not often use a table-napkin when you bolt down your food, you evidently think that it is funny to have a guest come into, and go out of a gentleman’s house without having been offered the use of what to him was a necessity! And here” she ended fairly whimpering in her wrath, “I made this set on purpose for him to use while he was here, and embroidered his initial in the corner of each one of them!”

“Have you found them all?” James Fenimore demanded between the paroxysms of the laughter that had him in its clutches once again, “I want to know,” he ended, “honestly I want to know, because he took with him when he went away from here, a thing that looked exactly like the one that you have in your hand! I believe that he thought it was a handkerchief!”

Hastily then, even for her a little nervously the widow hunted up the napkins that belonged to the set to which she had referred, and she found that one was lacking, she

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that she had several good-sized vials full of wrath that needed to be relieved of their contents, and as the one who even then was standing smiling there before her had very lately brought to her profound anxiety, it seemed to her that some of that which she had then in her possession bottled up might as well be emptied out upon the young man's head; in pursuance of this idea, she without preliminaries of any kind, began:

"You think that you are fit to associate with honorable gentlemen, and yet you do not hesitate to stoop to highway robbery, and even boast of having stolen things, and treat it all as if it were a joke!" and then, because his laughter once more got the better of his determination, she added, "You're nothing but a foolish crazy boy! You haven't any proper understanding of anything or anybody! The idea of your taking Mr. Marclay's personal belongings!"

"We did take everything that he had with ~~him.~~" James Fenimore admitted weakly, for he was exhausted from the battles with the waves of mirth that had been sweeping over

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him, "But we gave it most all back to him" he stoutly declared, "that is," he ended with secret satisfaction, "all except a few little things that we wanted to keep ourselves."

CHAPTER XXIII

HAD MRS. CATHARINE WARD beheld the one who so capably assisted James Fenimore in the work concerning which the widow criticised the latter very harshly, she might have told him what she thought of the performance, but in all human probability he would not have understood a single one of all the words she would have said; Storm Cloud was not very familiar with the English language, and although Mrs. Ward used many signs and symbols when she was carrying on a conversation with another human being, she had no systematic knowledge of the sign language then widely used by American Indians and American pioneers; there is no doubt however, that she would have made the red man understand that she highly disapproved of something that he had done, had she been made aware of his participation in what she looked upon as a most heinous crime; but, as it happened, she did not know who had been the young man's partner in what she chose to consider as having been a

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very reprehensible deed, and for that matter, she did not know just what the deed had been. She might have been enlightened at least to some extent, could she have had the power, for unquestionably she would have wished to exercise it, by means of which she could have seen, heard and understood all that transpired in Storm Cloud's lodge that evening when he returned to it; when the Indian was within half a block of his own private domicile, he did not jam his hand down into a convenient pocket and produce therefrom a latch-key as many modern husbands do when they approach their homes; he employed a great deal more formality, and surely much more caution, than do most of those who are about to enter their own doors; while he was yet at some distance from the spot where he had that morning left his wife and child, he placed the first finger of one of his hands over that of the other one at a certain peculiar angle, after which, he laid them both upon his lips and blew a blast that sounded very much as if a wood-dove were sitting there beside him calling to his mate; he blew three separate blasts, allowing some little time to elapse between each one of them; and then he waited anxiously, until

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he heard the answering call; and when it came so that he knew Evening Breeze had heard him, and was waiting to welcome him, there was no chance for any grass to grow beneath his feet, for they, as if indeed wings had suddenly been supplied to them, fairly flew over the intervening space, and very soon he silently and softly lifted the leather curtain that took the place of a door, and he and his own family were at once reunited. Without unnecessary preliminaries, and without needless delay of any kind, the three proceeded to partake of a bountiful repast that had been for hours simmering over an open fire that was slowly burning in the middle of the tepee; during the progress of the meal, which was not divided into courses but which was, in spite of that fact, very nourishing and palatable, very few remarks were made, although the expression of the eyes and of the faces generally of those who were thus satisfying their natural and material hunger, testified to the fact that they were all very glad to be together again; each person helped himself or herself as the case might be, out of the receptacle that contained the food, without resorting to the aid of knife or fork or spoon, tearing

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the meat into strips, and retrieving from time to time according to each one's individual desire, bits of other articles that had been cooked with it; Storm Cloud had known that morning exactly what he would have for supper, provided of course that he would be in a condition to require an evening meal at all, for he himself had furnished the game that made an important part of it; when the hunger of each one had been satisfied, very little unconsumed food remained, and this small portion was left within the rude pot or kettle in which it had been cooked, and they together were set aside until they should be once more needed. Had Mrs. Ward been watching this little family, she would no doubt have been quite shocked because of the utter absence of any of the forms of etiquette that are observed in civilized society, as well as by the total lack of table manners; she would have been astonished also to see them, as soon as they had finished their repast, squat down beside the open fire, sitting flat upon the ground, with knees drawn up and arms tightly clasped about them, maintaining perfect silence, and apparently each one lost in his own dreams; these dreams did not however evidently separate

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them from each other, for little Moonless Night's great, dark, adoring eyes stared constantly first at one of her parents, and then at the other, and Storm Cloud gazed at Evening Breeze as if his life, and all that life could ever mean for him, were utterly devoted to her and to their child, while she, as could be plainly seen, had given the two who sat there near to her, all the proud and steadfast love that she was capable of giving to anyone or anything.

After quite a period of this silent but heart-felt, communion, Storm Cloud began in a low tone of voice to slowly recount the adventures that he had had during the day; he pictured the Englishman, stern, strong, over-bearing and self-satisfied, mounted on a good horse, starting out in the morning from the big white house with its many windows and dark-green shutters, which were as he signified, objects of intense interest; he called attention to the fact that the man had been an honored guest in the house from which he had just emerged; he followed him then as he came out between the two big stone pillars upon the corduroy road, which he described in such a way that it could not be mistaken for anything else; then he showed how

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James Fenimore his friend, a young man had found him in the forest and had told him that the man whom he had already pictured had in his possession something that his friend wanted; the chase, the capture and the denouement were all graphically set forth, the narrator making particularly emphatic the part that he himself had played; by a method of communication that was both indubitable and clear, he made his two auditors see the most minute circumstances that were connected with the transaction. He showed them how the captive was compelled to stand helpless, because his friend had a loaded gun pointed at him, while he himself with his own hands removed all of his garments, until at last he stood there stern, strong, proud and overbearing, though he was as weak and as naked as a little baby that has just been born; when he turned at last from the captive himself to the things that he had taken from him, he exhibited with pride, that was tempered with awe, some little keepsakes that had especially taken his fancy, and that James Fenimore had apportioned to him as his part of the spoils; among these, prominently displayed and immediately appropriated by Evening Breeze, when she was

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told to choose what she would like to keep, was something that Mrs. Ward would not only have recognized but that she would have been very likely to have snatched and carefully concealed; Evening Breeze though had different ideas concerning it, and instead of trying to hide it, she made use of it in such a way as to make it very noticeable; its bright color and elastic properties strongly attracted her, and she strutted back and forth after she had put it on, while both Storm Cloud and little Moonless Night gazed at her admiringly; it pleased her just as much as if it had been made on purpose for her, because, or so it seemed to her, it fitted her so well; she wore it as a sort of sash across one shoulder, and fastened it under her opposite arm; but it had never been intended for the use to which she put it, and when it had been discovered on the person of its owner, he had been wearing it beneath all his other garments next the skin to ward off rheumatism.

Storm Cloud finished off his narrative, by drawing for his auditors a picture of himself as he marched out of the little hollow, through the gully, and back into the road; for he had then

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been carrying a brace of pistols, and a sword, besides his own ruder and less expensive weapons, and it seemed to him that armed in this way he had been invincible.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN Mary Ward bade her lover farewell one bright morning not long after the events that have recently been narrated had transpired, she was oppressed by a dark and unexplained foreboding that she might not soon behold his face again; it seemed to her somehow, that she could not bear to have him go, and yet she loved her country dearly, and knew that he was going to her aid; and so, like many another woman of her day, she clung to the man whose happy wife she hoped sometime to be, and bade him do his duty, although it seemed to her that her fond heart would surely break.

“James,” she faltered, “always remember how much we love each other, but never forget that we both love the cause for which once more you are about to put your life in jeopardy.”

“Sweetheart,” he whispered, and his young voice was trembling too, “if I should nevermore return to you in this fair world where you and I have known and loved each other,

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I believe God Who created us and set our human feet upon the path in which we are now walking, will in His great kindness, permit us to meet again after we have passed beyond the earth and its many mysteries. And" he ended solemnly, while Mary's tears were mingled with his own, "if I should be the first to go out of this life, do not doubt that I will wait for you, if I am allowed to act at all in accordance with my own volition."

And so with kisses and innocent embraces, she sent him forth to battle for freedom and the right; she did not watch him out of sight, because she had been told that doing so, might bring bad luck to one or both of them, and when, having reached the point from which for the last time he could command a view of the spot where he had left her, he turned his horse so that they both were facing it he saw her standing quietly looking down with bowed head and folded arms, and he knew that she was praying, and so he joined her silently and actually in spite of the material distance that was then between them; there were many partings similar to this one in those brave days when men and women threw themselves and all that they held dear into

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the balance on the side of liberty, and followed after *Washington*, who courageously, unwaveringly and grandly led them on, although the road on which they journeyed, was thickly set with thorns and brambles, and was often sadly stained with strong men's blood, and filled with shrieks of agony and dying groans; for flowers of faith and love were always blooming there, and many heads were humbly bowed in prayer.

Upon the day that followed her lover's departure, Mary, in company with her elder sister, started out upon the corduroy road; in accordance with their usual custom, both girls were mounted on a single horse, one of them in the saddle, and the other on a pillion at the back of it; as they left their own gateway, Susan, who happened to be in front, tightened the reins, thus restraining the animal on the back of which they sat, while she, waving her hand to her father who was standing at the top of the hill up which the driveway led, watching them off, called out to him:

“Don't worry about us unless we stay out until after sunset!” Then turning to Mary she added, “It may be risky for us to go alone, but

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Uncle 'Diah or any of the servants would be more frightened than we would be ourselves, if anything would happen so that we would be in need of protection, and I for one have grown so tired of being cooped up there as if I were a prisoner, that even if I knew we were going to meet with some adventure, I would still be most unwilling to give up trying to make this visit that has already been deferred so long."

"Old Dexter will do all that he can do to bring us safely home again," declared her sister, patting affectionately one of the broad hips upon which the pillion rested, "he knows the way there as well or even better than we do."

And then they chatted as young women always will, of many things, some of them of consequence, and some of them as a disinterested listener might have thought, decidedly inconsequential; in this latter class, might have been included a remark that Susan made after they had gone for some little distance along the road, and were about to cross over a narrow and somewhat shaky bridge.

"I wonder" she said speculatively, "if Courtney Monahan intends ever to marry."

"It seems to me sometimes," her sister

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ventured, "that he is very much in love with you, and it quite often seems to me," she ended archly, "that you are very much in love with him."

"But even if a man is in love with a woman," vouchsafed the older girl a little sadly, "he does not always wish to marry her."

"How I wish," cried Mary with enthusiasm, "that you two could be as happy as James and I are! If this war," she ended, sighing deeply, "were only over how different life would seem!"

At that moment, the horse that they were riding having almost reached the farther end of the little wooden bridge, shied at something that he saw, or thought he saw, beside the road; Susan spoke to him encouragingly and he advanced, but under protest and carried them beyond the bridge; then, all at once, without warning and without preamble, pandemonium took the place of the cloister-like quiet that had made the surroundings so peaceful and so safe. Yells of savage rage and shouts of savage triumph shook the air, and a band of Indians wearing war-bonnets, and with their faces streaked and spotted with different colored

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paints, debouched upon the highway from beneath the bridge where they had been in hiding. As their ponies scrambled up the bank that led into the road, they brandished their tomahawks, and waved the long, sharp spears that they were carrying, keeping up an incessant and almost fiendish screeching all the while. Riding at their head, and acting evidently as their leader, much to the surprise of the girls, who even in their overwhelming terror noticed the unusual circumstance, was a young woman, whose wild demeanor and the generally distraught expression that permeated her entire personality, proclaimed her to be a devotee of some sort. As she approached the sisters, for old Dexter overcome with fear absolutely refused to budge either in one direction or in the other, her joyful screams, and the strange contorting grimaces into which her features were twisted were positively appalling. As she came up to the two other girls, for she must have been about their own age, she began to sing, giving voice to her feelings in a sort of gloating and most unholy chant. Mary, who, with the aid of her lover, had studied some of the Indian dialects, understood enough of what she was saying to make

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out that she wished, and for that matter intended, to send her sister and herself to the happy hunting-ground, so that they might as servants wait upon and care for someone whom she herself had dearly loved. All that was now required, was to prepare them for the journey that they were about to take. She proposed to place this task as it were, upon her own shoulders, and in order to accomplish it, she seized old Dexter's bridle-reins, for they had fallen from Susan's nerveless hands and were laying loosely on his neck. Her followers gathered round the captives, and the little party, with the two girls and their bewildered horse in the midst of it, were about to leave the vicinity, when suddenly, a musket was fired from somewhere near at hand, and a voice that had in its stern tones, insistent, fierce authority, commanded, speaking in a language that is known to some extent by all the tribes of North American Indians.

“Disperse, Villians, or die at once!”

Deserted by her followers who disappeared as if by magic, the young leader crest-fallen and moaning pitifully withdrew.

CHAPTER XXV

OLD DEXTER, after having passed through the harrowing experience that has just been recounted, was very evidently well pleased when his head was turned toward home, for his ears were pointed sharply forward, and he needed no urging, but started off at once in a sort of one-sided ambling gallop, a gait that was then considered to be particularly well adapted to the purposes which it was then serving; the girls looked about them anxiously to see if they could catch a glimpse of their unknown rescuer, but he did not appear, although just as old Dexter was getting well under way they once more heard his voice:

“Have no fear” he said with distant chivalry, “but return to your home at once.”

It had seemed to these two pioneer young women, that they knew every knoll and every hollow, every declivity and every rise of ground, every thickly wooded spot and every open space, between the narrow wooden bridge that they that day so gladly left behind them, and the

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gate that led into the driveway of their home; but that day, somehow, every bush seemed like a crouching foe, and every tall slim sapling seemed about to don a war-bonnet and step forth in paint and feathers, tomahawk in hand; even old Dexter shared their trepidation, and shied and even snorted more than once, as he went back along the track he had traversed so sedately only a few hours before. Whether this action on his part was due to his desire to forcibly impress upon the two light and lovely burdens whom he bore upon his back that, according to his equine instinct, many dangers were hidden close beside the way, or whether he really did hear or smell someone, or something moving along but at some little distance back from the road in the same direction in which they themselves were going, must be left entirely to conjecture. It is certain that neither Susan nor Mary saw anything that was possessed of flesh and blood, except the three members of their own little party, and an occasional four-footed or winged creature of the wilds while they were passing over that portion of the corduroy road that lay between the shaky little bridge, and the entrance to their father's estate.

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But having reached the latter, they were surprised as well as pleased, to meet riding leisurely in a direction that was opposite to the one in which they were proceeding, the young American officer with whose roan horse old Dexter had already become quite well acquainted. The two chargers began immediately to hobnob and exchange notes with each other, as they paced up the driveway side by side, while the young man listened eagerly to the account that Susan, with great animation, gave of the adventure through which her sister and herself had just passed.

“A voice called out . . .” she said in conclusion, “a voice that was accustomed I am certain to the giving of commands. The Indians knew that someone of importance had drawn near, and I am sure they believed that a regiment of cavalry was right upon their heels.”

“Had the regiment actually been there” Mary declared, “they would have had hard work had they kept within musket-shot of those fleet-footed ponies, for their riders were familiar not only with them, but also with every step of the way that led through the wilderness to

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forest fastnesses known probably only to them and such as they."

"Have you any idea why you were attacked?" inquired the visitor, "do you know whether or not any of those who composed this hostile band were personally your enemies?"

"I interpreted enough of what they said," the younger girl explained, "to understand that they had planned to send us at once into another world, so that we might be handmaidens to serve and care for someone who had only lately left the earth and of whom, the girl who acted as the leader had been very fond."

"Did they mention the name of the one who had recently died," the young man asked, "or speak of the manner of his death?"

"They *did* say something," Mary answered shudderingly, "about his having been killed by a white man, and now that I can think more calmly than I could while I was listening to them, I remember that they pointed particularly at me, as if the man who took his life was in some way connected with me."

"Dear Sister," Susan said in an awe-struck horrified tone of voice, "I wonder if our adventure of today was the result of the apprehension

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of the murderer of the sentry who was so mysteriously shot on the morning that followed our rescue?" glancing blushing at their companion, "from the night-riders. You know" she ended, "that James led the little company of volunteers who hunted down, captured and" hesitatingly, "executed the culprit."

"It is very evident to me," announced the visitor, "that you two young ladies must not venture out upon the public highway after this, without an armed and capable guard. At least," he compromised, "not for a long while or anyway" he ended bestowing upon them his engaging smile, "not until after the United States of America has been acknowledged to be a free and independent nation, and honored as such, among, and by the other nations of the world. For then" he added looking with open admiration first at one of his auditors and then at the other, "you will each have some strong arm to lean upon, the owner of which will be glad and proud to fend from you every danger, every annoyance and if possible every sorrow."

They rode on up the driveway then in silence; each young head was bowed, and each young heart was heavy, and yet, when human beings

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are both young and healthy, unless death itself has intervened between them and the possibility of human happiness, hope will paint bright pictures for them that their inner vision will behold, and whisper to them messages that they alone can hear.

The evenings were beginning to be very cool, for the autumnal chill was creeping over the river, the forest and the hills, so that the genial warmth, sent out by the blazing logs in the huge fire-place at one end of the family sitting-room at Evergreen Hill was very welcome. Mr. Ward, to whom his younger daughter had just been describing the unpleasant conditions by which her sister and herself had been surrounded that day, was standing before the fire, facing the others, who were seated in different parts of the large room; he had been listening gravely, and thus far without comment, to what Mary had been saying. As she finished however, he looked at her searchingly and asked:

“Would you know this young Indian woman if you should see her again? Because” he went on still carefully watching his daughter’s face, “it may be necessary for us to find and silence

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her, in order to protect ourselves against further molestation from the same source."

As the meaning of his words became apparent to those who heard them, they all with one accord rose to their feet, and joined him, grouping themselves about him in front of, and near to the fire-place. As they did so the young American officer, who had been earnestly and quietly talking to Susan, without waiting for Mary's answer said:

"The circumstances were so startling, so terrifying, Sir, that it seems to me your daughters would not be very likely to vividly remember any one of the individuals who participated in the affair. However" he ended confidently and reassuringly, "I do not believe that the young woman to whom you have just referred, will ever cause you or your family any more trouble, because," as he said the words his lips were set in a tight tense line, "the musket from which the warning shot was sent was loaded and fired again at once, and the second bullet found its mark."

CHAPTER XXVI

THERE was a certain dynamic winsomeness about the personality of Courtney Monahan, that attracted to him the high regard of almost all of those with whom he was at any time closely associated; even Catharine Ward, although she was fiercely opposed to him in many ways, realized the existence of this strongly pronounced characteristic of his, whenever she was in his presence, but, when freed from the sort of spell that he seemed to cast over those who were near to him, she did not hesitate to free her mind of many thoughts that had been hidden, as it seemed, even from herself, while she had been subject to it. On the morning following the day upon which her nieces had been frightened by the band of hostile Indians, the widow, having observed that Susan was sitting listlessly and idly at the window from which she had sorrowfully watched the young American officer, as he rode slowly and thoughtfully down the driveway, and out between the huge stone pillars that guarded it until he dis-

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appeared upon the corduroy road, approached her and abruptly began:

“There is no doubt that he looks very fine in gold braid and epaulets, flourishing his musket with his sabre in his hand! But it is very possible, that could we see him as he really is, he would not cut as handsome and as heroic a figure as he does now!” The girl looked up at her, and the stricken look that rested on her fair young face, seemed but to add fuel to the vituperative flame that her aunt had kindled in her own mind, for she went on even more vindictively than at first. “He sneaks around, and no one, not even Mary’s Yankee lover seems to recognize his name, and yet he boasts that he has been in close touch with the leader of the revolutionists, and every little while, he bobs up here and spends an evening making love to you! I think that it’s disgraceful, and I believe that I will put a stop to it!” She had been ranting along without any definite idea as to where her remarks would lead, but her last words seemed to demand a continuation of the thought that they had suggested. “I will talk it over with your father at once, and we will see what can be done about it!” With these words she was

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about to leave the room, for Susan seemed to be too apathetic to care to interfere, but just as she was bustling through the doorway, she turned again toward the girl and added, "The next time he comes here we will have matters arranged so that he will be properly received!"

She went away then, bent upon the preparatory errand that she had in mind, but if, instead of doing so, she had remained a little longer in the room that she was leaving, she might have seen her niece, who had been holding back her tears, until it seemed to be no longer possible for her to restrain them, put her head down in her hands, and with her slight form shaken by convulsive sobs, give way to the hopelessness of desperate and unavailing weeping. For looking back upon certain circumstances that had occurred during the otherwise delightful visit that had just been terminated, the young woman could not fail to realize, that while the man whom she had just watched out of sight undoubtedly admired, and as she had often dreamed, and sometimes hoped, even in some degree, loved her yet, he not only did not intend to ask her to join her life to his, but insofar as he could, he meant to conceal from others as well

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as herself, any tender feeling that he might have for her. And so she saw before her there prone and pitiful, and helpless stark and still, and ready for its burial in her own heart, away from the sight and knowledge of all of her own kind, what might have been both beautiful and bright, strong and warm, and pulsing with bounding, buoyant, vibrant, vivid life. Susan Ward was one of those who saw things as they were. She could not long deceive herself into believing that what she wished to be was so because of her desire; she had to have good reasons to back up her own beliefs, and having once established those beliefs, she did not change them easily. She was a staunch and steadfast patriot, and the fact that her own fair, fond, human hope was bleeding there before her, neither lessened nor estranged her fealty to the country that she loved. And so she rose and dried her tears, but before she closed the door that would forevermore shut from her sight the cold, still, lovely form that she alone and lonely had straightened and made comely for its last long sleep, she looked again upon it with wide eyes and indrawn breath; and as she looked, it seemed to her a flush as if of life renewed, began

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to creep like pale but gleaming winter sunshine across the beauteous features, and about the quiet form; seeing this she did not close the door entirely, but left it just a little open, so that sometimes in the future, she might see once more the fair, fond hope that she had in secret cherished.

And he who had, although he did not fully realize what he had done, awakened in her heart the living love that she had tried to bury, was at that moment thinking seriously of her; but he was not, as she was, all alone, for he had with him then a friend to whom he had confided many secrets. All he had to do in order to enter into converse with his friend, was just to lean a little farther forward in his saddle, and place one hand upon his gallant charger's neck to make sure that he was giving him his whole attention; when he knew that he was listening he said:

“She thinks of me with tenderness, Roan, I am sure that she thinks of me with tenderness, for when I speak to her, she always listens eagerly, as if she did not wish to lose the hearing of a single syllable that I would utter. She pays such strict attention to everything I say, that

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sometimes I am half afraid to talk when she is near me, for fear my Irish tongue, Roan, will trip and take advantage of me as it sometimes, though rarely does, and say to her some of the things that I have never told to anyone but you. I do not wish to hurt her, Roan, I would not hurt her for the world and yet I know" he ended sadly, "she thinks of me with tenderness."

And then for hours they journeyed on in silence. Many were the miles that they two had passed over in each other's company; many were the dangers they had met together, and many were the restful nights they had spent but just a little way apart upon the ground. They had by this time reached the Hudson river, and they had left the main highway behind them long before. They climbed a little eminence from which they overlooked the fortifications and the breast-works and redoubts of Stony Point. After a time, during which they both inspected carefully all that was before them, the rider quietly addressing his companion said:

"I believe that if we had a strong incentive, Roan, if for instance the British should capture

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Stony Point, and we should be told to retake it so that the stars and stripes might again wave above it, we could cross that strip of beach when the tide was low and go right up that rough forbidding hill. Some of those who started up the hill would never reach the top of it, for we could not hope to altogether take them by surprise." Then after looking the ground over carefully he added, "But we would try in every way we could to do that, Roan. Yes" thoughtfully and conclusively after further contemplation of the scene that was before them, "that would be our best plan. We would surprise them if we could."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE year seventeen hundred and seventy-eight was drawing toward its close, when Catharine Ward and those whom she directed were busily engaged in making preparations for the entertainment of the distinguished guest whom the owner of Evergreen Hill particularly delighted to honor. Uncle Obediah, remembering vividly the mistakes which he had been accused of having made during one of Mr. Marclay's former visits, was especially industrious and careful as to carrying out the orders that were freely given to him; the widow was very active and dictatorial, for, as she frequently remarked, she did not believe that the gentleman who would according to expectations soon arrive at the home of her brother-in-law, would be likely to remain in America much longer, because, she declared, the revolutionists would, as a matter of course within a very short space of time, be entirely subdued, and taught a lesson that they would not soon forget. While the views, politically

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speaking, of Mr. Ward's daughters were radically different in almost every particular than those of their aunt, yet they did not often enter into controversy with her concerning them. It is possible that their continued forbearance, and the respectful but reserved attitude assumed by them toward herself, may have made her even more daring in her statements than she would otherwise have been; however, when,—in the midst of the uproar into which she had thrown the entire house in order to, as she considered, fittingly prepare it for the reception of the distinguished visitor—she mentioned slightly the name of one whom the girls regarded with a respect that was very near to reverence, Mary indignantly protested:

“Aunt Catharine,” she began, her sweet voice trembling and her gray eyes very dark, “I do not think that you can be fully aware of the meaning of your words. James has told me,” she went on proudly, “that the personality of the one to whom you have just referred is so dignified and commanding, that anyone feels himself to be ennobled and uplifted by being in his presence. He says that vicious thoughts and mean intentions, melt before him as the snow be-

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fore the sun. Those who follow after him" she continued, standing very straight with shining eyes and heightened color, as if she herself were one of them, "adore him and endure all sorts of hardship and privations cheerfully for his sake. I do not see" she ended feelingly, "how anyone who has respect for anything that is good, clean, noble and unselfish can fail to honor Washington."

The widow snorted like a horse that has come suddenly upon something that is both alarming and surprising, and there is no doubt that she would soon have made an answer of some kind to the charge that had been brought against her, but just as she began to mumble something about young women having respect for their elders, she was notified of the actual arrival of the expected guest, and her entire attention was immediately absorbed by that fact.

Having learned from experience what steps were necessary in order to secure at least comparative privacy, Mr. Ward arranged matters, so that as far as possible, Mr. Marclay and himself would be protected against intrusions. As soon as they were both comfortably seated he anxiously inquired:

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“What do you think, Sir, of the present state of affairs? Does it seem to you that we have reason to be encouraged?”

His visitor looked at him appraisingly as if he were more profoundly interested in him than in the question that he had just asked; however, after a few moments, he replied:

“In a matter of this sort, it is the final result that we must always consider, and concerning that, there can be no question. The mere fact” he went on as if to prove the truth of the statement that he had just made, “that their men are in rags and almost starved, should be enough to satisfy you or any other observant person that they cannot hold out against overwhelming odds but must soon be ready to capitulate. At the battle of Monmouth” he ended, “we showed how superior trained troops are, to the rabble, no matter how enthusiastic the latter may be.”

“There is no doubt though,” Mr. Ward demurred, “that their insane devotion to what is of course, only an idealistic hallucination, has lead them to do some very daring deeds and may” hesitatingly and fearfully, “lead them to commit many more rash acts from which” he

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ended, "all those who are openly opposed to them may be obliged to suffer."

"It is true" agreed the visitor, "that they are both rash and daring. They do not obey any of the rules of civilized warfare, but go about their work in primitive hap-hazard fashion. A recent naval battle, in which a Scotchman named Paul Jones distinguished himself, is a glaring example of their methods. One of their own ships" he went on scornfully, "fired a broadside into the vessel of their own commander! They were daring enough in this engagement" he ended grudgingly, "for when they found that the reach of our guns was so much greater than that of their own that their defeat seemed certain, they brought their ships up until the muzzles of the opposing guns actually touched each other, and then at close quarters attacked us with hand grenades."

"It is their tenacity both of life and purpose" ventured the host, "that often alarms and puzzles me; in this battle of which you have just spoken" he explained, "they did not stop fighting even when they knew that their own vessel was on fire, and after they had won a horrible and certainly a very bloody victory,

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although they themselves were suffering and very badly crippled, they limped away and drifted back and forth for fourteen days, and yet Paul Jones himself and many of the ones who fought with him in that engagement survived, and they have scattered broadcast, accounts of what they call an unexampled naval victory."

"I do not think that there is much occasion for alarm," the guest stolidly averred, "for though they may occasionally win a battle on the sea, or for that matter even on the land, they are certain in the end to be outnumbered and therefor vanquished." Then rising to his feet and stalking back and forth across the room he vehemently added, "The victory must be ours no matter what it costs! We can not brook their insolent assurance and their repeated insults!"

"As you say" agreed Mr. Ward watching his visitor with some timidity, "the victory must be ours. I only hope" he fervently ended, "that it will not be gained at too great a cost."

"You referred a little while ago" said Mr. Marclay stopping in front of his host and looking earnestly down at him, "to the great

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tenacity of life that is displayed by those who are opposed to us; that truly is remarkable! Why” he went on explanatorily, “they will exist on roots that they dig out of the ground, go without pay, and almost without clothing, and yet, at the drop of the hat, they are ready to go into battle and” he ended, “they fight like fiends!” then as if from an after-thought he dubiously added, “It may take us some little time to conquer them, for their endurance is wonderful! I heard only the other day that one of their horses supposed to have been killed at the battle of Germantown and left for dead on the field, returned to camp after two days and was again fit for service!”

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALTHOUGH the widow had the deepest and most heartfelt commiseration on account of the indignities that Mr. Marclay had endured at the hands of one who had happened to see him at Evergreen Hill, she not only did not dare to express this feeling to the sufferer, but so far as possible banished the remembrance of the unpleasant circumstances from her mind when in his presence. At the same time, every little while, something would come up that would remind her of them; she had said to herself many times that she did not believe one word of what James Fenimore had told her concerning the table-napkin, and yet she found herself one day when overlooking the accommodations that had been provided for the visitor in his private apartment, searching through his personal belongings to see if she could find it. As the investigation she made proved to be without result, she felt that the position she had taken regarding the matter had been confirmed until only a short

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time before the departure of the honored guest, in fact as she was officiously helping him to don his elegant surtout, she noticed sticking out of one of the commodious pockets of the garment that she was holding in her hands, the corner of the article in question upon which she herself had embroidered boldly and beautifully the initial M. As this small circumstance showed conclusively that at least a portion of the tale that the young man had recounted was correct, she afterward very often wondered whether the whole of it might not be so, and following out this line of thought, she resolved to question him carefully regarding the particulars of the unfortunate affair during the next visit that he made at Evergreen Hill.

But James Fenimore was not at the time free to follow his own inclinations, which would almost inevitably have led him into the vicinity of the home of his sweetheart. He who had been so strong and self-sufficient had been shorn as in the twinkling of an eye, both of strength and independence, and was laying weak and helpless on a bloody battlefield surrounded by the bodies of those who had been only just a very little while before, young, strong and

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able-bodied men, but whose youth, strength, and power of self-direction had been taken away from them because they had been willing, even anxious, to separate themselves from all that they had ever hoped to be, in order that the cause they both loved and honored might be victorious. As he lay there among the others, weak from loss of blood, suffering from wounds that had gone past the stage of numbness, and were giving him excruciating pain, his mind reverted sadly to the pleasant peaceful days that he had spent with Mary Ward when they had both been innocent and happy, because they had been free from bodily as well as mental anguish, and because the future seemed to them to be a rosy and a blissful dream. In fancy, even in the midst of his keen suffering, he felt again her soft and clinging arms as they were placed about his neck, and then it almost seemed as if he felt her lips against his own, for in the intervals that were between the bitterest and the most nerve-racking throes of his great agony, there swept across his inmost soul, a wave of perfect and most satisfying rest, that separated for the time his deathless spirit from his living body, so that it wandered freely back along the track that it

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had traveled over gathering flowers of memory, and breathing in refreshing and invigorating air. These intervals kept growing longer in duration, and the pictures that they brought to him kept growing more and more complete, until at last, he lost entirely all material knowledge as to where he was, or what happened to his young, strong and able-bodied human form; and after that he lay so quietly among the others who had been like him young, strong and able-bodied, that anyone who had observed him closely, might have thought he had passed beyond all merely human suffering; and it was true that he himself, was very far away from everything that was connected with the horrors of the battle in which he had displayed his bravery and his sincere devotion to the starry flag he followed; he had no bitterness or hatred toward the ones against whom he had contended, for they were to him but pitiful and misled human beings, striving to obey the power that was over them. It was the principal of injustice and of oppression that was represented by them that he, as well as those who fought beside him, sought to conquer, and in order to accomplish this, it was necessary to do away

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with many earthly lives, that otherwise they would have held as sacred as their own, and as they placed their human forms in jeopardy, they did not take in any sense, unfair advantage of their foes; and so although his human hands were stained with human blood, although the musket that was laying there upon the ground beside him had been aimed with deadly accuracy, and had taken heavy toll from those who had attempted to break through the line that it had helped to hold, and although the sabre, the hilt of which he firmly clutched, had had its shining surface marred by dark-red blotches, yet the spirit of James Fenimore was free from murderous intention; he was not cruel or vindictive. It was not his wish to cut and slash and maim and slay; but in order to attain to the end he sought to gain, it was necessary to remove his opponents from his path, for, as it seemed to him, it was the only path that he could with his own consent proceed upon, for he had always listened closely to the "still small voice" that had never, as it seemed to him, directed him amiss; and while the duty that he had just been trying to accomplish was not in accordance with his inner

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nature or desires, he had gone about it with enthusiasm and he had thrown into the balance on the side that he believed to be the right side, all the force of which he had found himself to be possessed; and so with cessation of hostilities, when feeble human hands had ceased to resist the onslaught of other feeble human hands, when young, strong and able-bodied men arrayed against each other had ceased to struggle, the feeling that had nerved his hand to strike and wound and kill his fellowmen had fallen away from him as if it had been but a garment that had been laid aside; and in its place, had come compassion for those whom he had wounded, as well as for the ones who had been wounded at his side; the fact that they had been opposed to him, that they had tried to bar his progress toward what he had been thoroughly convinced was right, had made of them his enemies, and as such, he had not hesitated to smite them hip and thigh. But stretched out there around him on the ground, he recognized them only as his fellowmen sharing with him the helplessness and agony of those who had been worsted in the fight; and so when he had passed beyond the consciousness of human pain, he did

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not take with him revenge or cruelty or hatred, or any other merely mortal and malicious thought; and on the other hand, he had the satisfaction that always comes with knowledge that a duty that was hard has been well done. He felt that through his strenuous endeavor, he had come a little nearer than he had been before to the attainment of the fair ideal that had been as a living light to him, shining often on the path, on which, in spite of everything that strove to keep him from it he had set his human feet.

He felt that the cause for which he had willingly and gladly risked all his hopes of human happiness, had been forwarded, at least to some extent, by the self-sacrificing, mighty efforts, that he himself had made; and so, although his earthly tenement lay there prone and pitiful upon that bloody battlefield, the spirit that had animated it and made it comely for mortal eyes to look upon, the spirit that Mary Ward had honored, and upon which she in her purity and tenderness had bestowed her virgin love, was floating free and buoyant, far above the ills of earth, far removed from the bitterness of strife and all unkind contention, for James Fenimore had laid himself young, strong and able-bodied

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upon the altar of his well-beloved country's weal or woe, and his human body did not rise again to walk among his fellow-men as it had done before that altar had received it.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WINTER of 1778-79 was a memorable one in the annals of American history.

Except for the personal influence of Washington, the patriotic army then encamped at Middlebrook would have become disintegrated, and the members of it scattered, so that the cause of liberty and equality under the law, for which so many precious lives had been already sacrificed, would have been forever lost. The soldiers were almost without food and clothing, and were receiving absolutely no remuneration for the time and strength they were steadily expending. At the same time, many outside influences were brought to bear upon them, with a definite desire to add to the depression of spirits that, without the example of an almost superhuman courage, and a devotion to what he conceived to be his duty, that amounted almost to religious zeal as exhibited by their glorious leader, might have eventually, utterly wrecked and made as naught the hopes of the young republic.

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But *Washington* sharing with them their unpalatable fare, bearing with them the almost unbelievably heavy and galling burdens that were daily and hourly laid upon their already weary shoulders, going among them as if he were one of them, and yet recognized by them all as being above and beyond them, uplifted and sustained them, so that no influence could undo the work that he had done and that he was constantly, steadfastly and cheerfully doing. *Washington* had within himself an intensity of purpose, a cool and practical judgment, a phenomenal poise and a remarkably unruffled manner; these qualities as possessed by him had a peculiarly magnetic and alluring power, so that anyone who came into his presence, although naturally and habitually opposed to them, not only immediately felt toward them an admiration that amounted almost to reverence, but absorbed, whether consciously or not, something of their beauty and their strength. It was through the almost holy influence of this one man, who, although in human form, was far removed from human selfishness, narrowness and baseness that lesser men, who otherwise would have been led astray, were guided and

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upheld, so that they followed him along a path that they, if unsupported by some other mortal stronger than they were, would have considered to be far too difficult for them to walk upon. It was through the marvelous and magnetic influence toward intrinsic right that *Washington* exerted over all who came into his dignified and gracious presence, that the difficult and dangerous days that made up the winter of 1778-79 were passed in safety by the armies of the then young and inexperienced American United States; the soldiers gave themselves into his hands, because they loved and honored him, and through the adoration that they felt for him, they sacrificed themselves and all they held dear for the cause that he supported, although they did not fully comprehend his reasons for so doing.

Late in February 1779 Mr. Marclay was making one of his periodical visits at Evergreen Hill as the guest of its owner. He was seated with the latter in the comfortable and commodious room, into which he had been ushered by the busy bustling widow who had with punctillious politeness, immediately withdrawn. The two men looked at each other appraisingly

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and inquiringly during a few moments of silence, after which, Mr. Ward in a guarded tone of voice began:

“I have to inform you, Sir,” his tone expressed gratification and yet a certain degree of sadness, “that the young man, who, through having seen you here in my home, caused you at one time considerably annoyance, will never again offend you, as he died of his wounds a short time ago upon the battle-field. I deeply regret” he went on earnestly, “that any combination of circumstances connected with your visits here has at any time deprived you of anything of value. I hope,” he ended deprecatingly, “that the loss of the papers that were stolen from you has not brought about any serious result.”

“As to that,” answered Mr. Marclay after a few moments that were spent by him apparently in earnest retrospection, “time alone will tell the extent of the damage that was done. There is one thing that is certain though” he continued hopefully, “and that is, that the rebels are becoming more and more disheartened. If Washington did not” he went on disgustedly, “constantly inspire them to keep on struggling

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against the heavy odds that as they can all see are piling up higher and higher in front of them, I believe they would very soon be conquered; but even he," he ended with great satisfaction, "can not much longer hold out against us."

"General Putnam's feat at Horse Neck" remarked Mr. Ward casually and as if the matter were really of very little account, "was wild and reckless. Such deeds, when they are described with vividness, attract the attention of those who are at a distance from the scene of their performance. I have been told" he went on wonderingly, "that those who watched the daring Yankee ride boldly down the precipice, were so much impressed by what they saw, that they related the facts to Governor Tryon with so much force, that he presented a complete suit of clothes to Isreal Putnam in order to recoup him for the damage to his beaver hat that had been caused by the passage through it of one of the many bullets that were fired at him by the British troops. It seems to me" he ended admiringly, "that Governor Tryon was very generous in that case . . . very generous indeed."

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“He probably considered,” said the guest, “that a suit of clothing more or less, did not amount to much and sent the present to the fellow in recognition of the fact that he had led forlornly and alone a hopeless charge.”

At that moment their somewhat desultory conversation was unexpectedly interrupted. Mrs. Ward after having hastily knocked upon the door that had been carefully closed, excitedly and for her, rather tremulously entered the room.

“I wish to know,” she started out addressing Mr. Ward, “whether or not you can give me exact information as to the time and place of James Fenimore’s death. There is something,” she went on growing more and more excited as she talked, “that has just happened, that makes me very anxious to know everything that you can tell me concerning it. I hope that you,” she continued turning apologetically toward the visitor, “will excuse me for coming in here as I have just done, but it seemed to me that I could not wait another moment without knowing all that I could learn about the matter.” Then fixing her attention once more upon Mr. Ward who

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was gazing at her silently, she added, "please let me know about this right away."

But instead of giving her the information that she asked, her brother-in-law demanded:

"What has happened Catharine, to startle you so?"

She looked at him fearfully and breathlessly for a long moment before she answered him; at length she almost whispered:

"Uncle 'Diah says that he has seen James more than once, standing at the door of the arbor made of Norway spruce trees in the yard, just as he used to stand when he was waiting to surprise us after he had been away and had suddenly returned."

CHAPTER XXX

IN SPITE of the fact that Mr. Marclay and Mr. Ward may have thought that the widow's report with regard to what Uncle Obediah had claimed that he had seen, was worthy of little consideration, it is certain that the old negro himself, not only fully believed the truth of his own statement, but often put himself in a position to bring about a repetition of the experience that had led him to make it. Led by his devotion to what amounted almost to a religious rite, he visited the evergreen arbor at frequent and regular intervals; each night after having performed faithfully the many little duties that, according to his own ideas, were incumbent upon him in his self-imposed capacity as general caretaker about the premises, he went to the spot from which he had seen, or so at least it seemed to him, either the human form or the wraith of the young man whom he had known and fondly loved from his early childhood. One evening not long after he had imparted the information that had so upset, to use

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her own expression, the widow, the affectionate old darkey, with his thoughts entirely absorbed by the contemplation of the errand upon which he was bound, came softly down the broad stone walk that led to the front door of what he called the big house. As soon as he reached the spot exactly at the foot of the little rise of ground or low hill upon which the residence had been erected, he left the walk, and going a little to the right of it, took up his station, quietly and as if from habit, beneath a widely branching tall long-needed pine tree; here he waited patiently and yet alertly, for in spite of his determined efforts to control them, the superstitious fears that were his natural heritage, shook his nerves and kept his muscles tense and taut. His silent and expectant vigil lasted for some length of time and he was beginning to despair as to its definite immediate result, when all at once he saw, or anyway he thought he saw, a figure that resembled closely, or so at least it seemed to him, the young, strong and able-bodied form that he had often seen moving freely lithely back and forth among the trees at which he was then gazing. He strained his eyes, and shading them with his dusky trembling hand, stepped a little

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nearer to the spot where the figure, as if reconnoitering, was still standing; he accepted it at first as being the same that he had looked upon with reverence more than once before, but as his heartbeats began to be a little more regular, and his breathing became a little less labored, he saw that it was somewhat different than the shape that he believed to be the form, material or otherwise, of one whom he had known and loved as boy and man; the figure that Uncle 'Diah was staring at intently, was he thought, a little stockier in general appearance than James Fenimore's had ever been.

As he regarded it with an earnestness that was not altogether unmixed with awe, it turned about, so that instead of contemplating its profile, he could look it squarely in the face. As he took advantage of this change of position, he realized that he saw before him a countenance with which, while he was not entirely unfamiliar, he was not at the same time very well acquainted; for the features at which he continued to stare as if he were indeed fascinated by them, were streaked, lined and seamed, but as could be plainly seen, even in the dim light than then enveloped them, not by age nor

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yet by sorrow or disease, but by the liberal application of many different kinds of many different colored paints. Storm Cloud had visited Evergreen Hill in quest of, or on account of his white and well-beloved brother upon several occasions during the years that had gone by, and at these times Uncle Obediah had observed him closely, but had not attempted to become intimately acquainted with him; indeed the African's mild and peaceful nature almost involuntarily refused to accept, or at least to coalesce, with the ferocity and stoical cold-blooded cruelty which, as he believed, were the chief characteristics of every Indian; so that, while his fears were to some extent allayed by the discovery that he had just made with regard to the figure that he saw, yet at the same time, it took all the courage of which he was possessed to stand his ground under the circumstances, and there is no doubt that had anyone been in a position to observe him carefully, it would have been seen that his own face was not altogether uniform in color; the hour of the night, the solitude of his surroundings, and the peculiar condition of the times in which he lived, contributed also to his lack of ease and confidence, so that

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the poor old fellow was beginning to wish that he had, for this one evening, refrained from coming out to watch for what he secretly considered to be the ha'nt of the cheery, wholesome and fun-loving patriot whom he had known so well. The Indian had begun to move swiftly and silently about the yard, keeping his attention directed toward the ground that was beneath his feet, as if he were in search of something there, and as Uncle Obediah watched him, his own feet, although they were so clumsy and so slow as compared with those of the other man, began to gravitate as if without his own volition toward his own abode, displaying considerable speed in so doing. But Storm Cloud's keen senses had apprised him of the presence of another human being in his immediate vicinity, and he did not propose to run the risk of having reinforcements thrust upon him, and besides, there was something that he wanted to find out, and here was an opportunity to do so that had been unexpectedly offered to him. Accordingly he seized upon this opportunity, and figuratively speaking, also upon Uncle Obediah. Intercepting the old negro as the latter was about to disappear behind a convenient corner

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of Mr. Ward's imposing residence, the Indian laid a muscular restraining hand upon the arm of the other man as he brokenly but anxiously asked:

“Why no more within the forest does my white brother journey? Why no more does he for Storm Cloud call? Why when the white Moon-God shows above the tree-tops does he no more appear?”

The old negro, in spite of his antipathy to the one who was holding him in a vice-like grip, realized that he too, missed and mourned for the bright, strong, mirth-provoking young fellow whom he himself had looked upon with admiration and affection through years of intimate association; hence although he felt inclined to try to wriggle away from him he gazed at him sympathetically and softly, sadly answered:

“He is daid.” Then feeling that, although the one to whom he gave the information stood stoically still, he was bracing himself as if he had received a heavy blow, he added, “he shed his precious blood to mek dis lan' a free lan' for you en me en all our chillun.”

The Indian let go of Uncle 'Diah's arm then,

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and stepping back until he was at some little distance from him bowed his head submissively and feelingly but calmly said:

“There is no one who stands straight, tall and supple like the strong, young sapling as he did. My white brother, who is now lost to me, because he has gone upon his last long journey, was brighter than the sun when it is midday. His eyes were shining like the stars at midnight and his smile was like the coming of the dawn. My white brother towered above them all; white men, red men, black men, like a tree that has gone higher than the rest. There was no one within the forest or upon the hill-side, who could outrun him or who could overcome him. She who was to have been his squaw will mourn for him forever, for she will never find a man who will be worthy to take his place. And I,” he ended sadly, “I will also always mourn for him.”

Then swiftly, silently, without a word either of thanks or of farewell to the wondering awe-struck negro, he disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXI

MARY WARD was a patriot; her love for her country was second only to the love that she gave to her Creator. Each time that her young lover had gone forth to battle for the cause of freedom and the right, she had sent him away bravely, but always she had hoped for reunion and for happiness; although at times, forebodings of disaster had thrust themselves before her mental vision, shutting out her contemplation of the contented, blissful future that her fond imagination pictured to her, they had quickly passed away like clouds that have been driven from the sky by the brightness of the sun. She had not fully understood what human life would mean to her without him, until she had to know that his human presence had departed from her never to return; then, like a tidal wave that sweeps across a plenteous and peaceful, flowery land, her sorrow blotted out and covered from her sight, all her fond hopes and all her blissful dreams. The two young beings as little boy and little girl had

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loved each other, and as the two had grown in strength and beauty, so also had the love that they had given to each other; no subterfuge or secret selfishness in either one of the young hearts had risen like a thing of evil in the path where they had walked together hand in hand; they had always shared each other's sorrows, and sharing them, each one had lifted up the other, so that together, they arose above them. Their joys had all been frank and mutual, for their young hearts were free from everything that bordered on deceit; the foundation upon which their pure love rested, was builded to withstand the shocks of years of chance and change. Both of them were splendid specimens of the staunch and sturdy stuff of which the typical American pioneer was made; they could have gone together into the wilderness, and tranquilly and happily, they could have conquered it, and made it bring forth in abundance both in fruit and flower. It is probable that their children would have been an honor to them following in their footsteps, carrying out their incompleated plans, and doing their unfinished work. The steadfast and self-sacrificing devotion to principle that led James Fenimore, and

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others like him, to unhesitatingly and even cheerfully, lay their youth and strength upon the altar from which arose their country's freedom, would have made those who possessed it, and their descendants after them, the bone and sinew of the government to which they would declare their fealty. But during the struggle for the independence of the United States of America, many young, strong and able-bodied human forms went down before the onslaught of those who tried to wrest its freedom from the young republic. Many mothers, wives and sweethearts were left desolate, so that the world for them that had been once so full of brightness, suddenly turned black, so that the future looked to them a thing to dread instead of something to look forward to with joy. Mary Ward had been generously endowed with feeling, and the keenness of her suffering was not blunted or assuaged by any lack of sensitive appreciation of its meaning; her future loomed before her so dark and so forbidding, that at times, it did not seem to her that she could possibly go on upon the lonely path that stretched away into the dim, uncertain distance. Susan understood, at least to some extent, the condition of her sister's

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mind, and tried in every way she could to help her, always hoping that after the first violence of her natural grief had somewhat worn away, she would again enter with her, into the peaceful plans and innocent happy dreams that had, except for temporary interruptions, made up their daily life before this crushing and disheartening sorrow had come upon her. She was well aware, however, that the time for which she hoped had not yet arrived and it was with deep, affectionate misgivings, that one morning she discovered that Mary had gone out alone, and was not to be found in any of her customary haunts. Old Dexter too was missing for Susan could not find him either in the paddock or the pasture that adjoined it. The frightened girl immediately informed her father and her aunt of what she feared had happened, and knowing the dangers that might even at the moment be surrounding her dear sister, started out at once in search of her, riding a trusty horse, with Aunt Dolly trembling and afraid, but determined to accompany her upon the pillion that was behind the saddle upon which she sat, and followed by Uncle Obediah and one of his assistants, each handling awkwardly and with

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indifferent success, his own mount. Not knowing in which direction to proceed, but fearing to divide her little party, Susan with her three willing but comparatively incapable coadjutors, after having passed between the two huge stone pillars that guarded the entrance to Evergreen Hill, set out upon the corduroy road, urged on by loving anxiety and natural fears. They had gone but a short distance, when Aunt Dolly, clutching with shaking fingers the human arm that was nearest to her huskily whispered:

“I done heard a cracklin’ in de bushes Chile! There am something movin’ over dat-away!” nodding her head violently toward the right, “It am something mighty big and skeery!”

It was evident that the two who formed the rear guard of the little cavalcade had also heard the noise to which the old negress had referred, for their eyes were rolling so that the bluish-white portions of them showed plainly; as to the intrepid leader of the expedition, she did not hesitate, but instantly turned the horse toward the spot from which the sound had proceeded, in spite of the fact that Aunt Dolly clung to her clumsily and cumbersomely. At first, the noise that was made by the three

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horses, as they trampled upon fallen twigs and brushed against the undergrowth and the lower branches of the trees, was the only sound that could be heard in the immediate vicinity, but presently, the anxious listeners not only heard, but also saw the cause of the disturbance that had attracted their attention; for looking up at them in mild surprise, as if he wondered why they were so fearful and excited, they saw old Dexter standing apparently alone beside a little tree to which he had been tethered, but so loosely that he had evidently been cropping the grass and tender twigs that had been growing all around him. The saddle and the blanket that had been strapped upon his back had slipped a little to one side, as if he had been rubbing them against the trees and bushes; this it seemed to Susan showed that he had been at the place where she had found him for some little time. Finding him alone did not tend to comfort her, but only added to her fears, and motioning to Uncle 'Diah to bring old Dexter with him she was about to leave the spot, when all at once it seemed to her that she heard something moving in the branches overhead, and looking up she saw a face that she had never

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seen before, and a pair of piercing eyes that were looking down at her; the appearance of the unknown face and of the keen, cold, cruel eyes did not reassure the girl, but the old negro's upward glance that had fearfully followed that of his young mistress, met an instant understanding recognition in the eyes that were looking down at them; immensely relieved and fully realizing the importance of the fact that he alone held at least to some extent the key to this trying situation Uncle 'Diah took the initiative and although with considerable trepidation said:

“Miss Mary am lost, Storm Cloud! Help us fin' her for his sake! She am de one he loved de bes' in all dis worl'!”

“She plays now with my papoose” announced the Indian stoically, “and Evening Breeze watches over her. When the sun sets she will be inside the house with many windows.”

CHAPTER XXXII

NORTH AMERICAN pioneers learned through experience many things concerning the so-called savages whom they found roaming through the forests, over the hills and across the plains of the great continent that they themselves desired to inhabit; one of the chief characteristics of the natives who dwelt in the vicinity of Evergreen Hill had been found to be a stubborn resistance to anything that bordered on arbitrary authority. Although Susan Ward felt like demanding either that her sister be returned to her at once or that she herself be led to the place in which she might be found, she knew that such a demand might defeat the very object that she would have in making it; hence, although tossed about by varying emotions and secretly taking careful note of the surroundings, she discreetly and as calmly as possible, followed by her dependent companions, withdrew from the spot, leaving the faithful horse to await the coming of the one whose absence had caused her such deep anxiety. When that afternoon, after hours of great

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uneasiness, she saw old Dexter with Mary on his back, ambling solemnly and tranquilly up the driveway, she knew that she had acted wisely, even although her decision had at the time cost her a most perplexing struggle; and when she once more held her sister in her arms, and gazed tenderly into her clear gray eyes, it seemed to her that the heavy shadow that had been resting there ever since the knowledge of her lover's earthly death had reached her, had lifted just a little or as she sadly thought had sunk perhaps a little deeper down.

In the early twilight of the day upon which Mary Ward returned from her mysterious excursion into the woods, concerning which, through her sister's influence she was never questioned nor admonished, another rider and another horse came slowly and thoughtfully between the two huge stone pillars and up the driveway, the entrance to which they guarded. As they topped the little rise of ground up which the driveway led, both horse and rider stopped involuntarily, or so at least it seemed to her who sat upon the rustic seat that had been placed just where the driveway turned; she looked up brightly, but in her manner there was

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a subdued and wistful undertone, a sort of wondering sadness that Courtney Monahan had never noticed there before, and that somehow found an answering chord in his own heart. The young beings felt that they were suddenly and widely separated from each other; it was as if a deep, an almost impassable gulf had been mysteriously and forcibly placed between them; it was as if this gulf had been dugged by unseen hands over which they themselves had no control; the easy friendliness, the sympathetic companionship, the freedom from restraint, that had thus far marked their association with each other, had all at once fallen away from them and left them, as it were, shorn of all pretense and all hypocrisy, so that, as the girl arose and moving forward, placed one soft white hand upon Roan's heavy mane, it seemed to her that when the man leaned down toward her, covering her hand with his own hand, they looked into each other's naked souls; and what they saw there, made them tremble, made them both afraid, so that Roan felt her fingers clutching at his mane and knew that, although he had often carried the rider who was then upon his back where deadly missiles had been

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falling thick and fast and where many flashing sabres had been searching for their prey, although the gallant charger knew that the man to whom he gave his understanding equine love had never quailed, even when surrounded by what seemed almost certain earthly death, yet he knew that he was quailing then; for the intelligent animal felt that the tremor that suddenly shook the slight form of the girl had communicated itself in some bewildering manner to his bold and daring rider, and in view of the peculiar circumstances, he arched his neck, and looked all about him wonderingly and inquiringly, as if he wished to discover what new appalling danger was threatening them all; the young man, because his own nerves were a little shaken, did not for once fully comprehend Roan's mental attitude but thought that the spirited animal had grown weary of inaction, so he laid a reassuring hand upon his neck and spoke soothingly to him. This treatment soon restored the customary composure of the horse, but the two human beings felt that they had reached a turning point in their young lives. Susan had by this time stepped back, so that she was at some little distance from the horse and

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rider, and as the latter dismounted and relinquished Roan's bridle-rein to Uncle Obediah, who grinning a glad welcome had just come up, she turned and led the way quietly but cordially into the house; as they were entering the door, the young man said, regarding her earnestly as he did so:

"I hope that my presence will not add to the poignancy of Miss Mary's sorrow. Of course" he went on as if in explanation of what he had already said, "nothing could make her mourn more deeply than she is now doing, but the fact that I have so far passed unscathed through conditions that were similar to those that took her lover from her, might make the sight of me bring an added pang to her already tortured heart. If you think that it is best" he ended anxiously coming nearer to her and speaking in a low and guarded tone of voice, "I will not meet your sister during this visit, but will hope to have that pleasure at some future time." And then seeing her evident confusion, and not understanding the reason that had given rise to it he added, "I would, however, be very glad to converse with her if you think that in any way my words would comfort or sustain her."

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“Sorrow,” announced Susan sadly and with conviction, “must be borne, no matter how heavily it may weigh one down. Each individual” she continued steadily and reasonably, “must adjust himself to his own disappointments and to his own regrets. No human being can really help another one when sorrow has laid her galling hand upon him. It is true though” she ended looking directly up into his eyes, “that the presence of others will sometimes make one temporarily forget one’s sorrow or at least” she compromised, “shut it up within one’s own soul so that it will not be apparent to anyone else.”

By this time they had come to a closed door, and in reaching for the latch of it, somehow their fingers met; whether she, as hostess, wishing to do honor to her guest, intended to open the door for him, and he in attempting gallantly to assist her balked her efforts, or whether he tried to do this slight service for her, and on account of his lack of familiarity with the exact location of the latch that was on this particular door was rather awkward about it, may never be absolutely determined; it is

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certain that as they stood there alone with each other, and quite near together, the door remained closed; what happened then was known only to themselves, and it is not probable that either one of them ever afterward described graphically the circumstances to any other person, but when they entered the room that was beyond the door that had been closed, both of them were blushing, both pairs of bright expressive eyes were unusually brilliant, both pairs of lips were delightfully and persistently tingling, and there were two exceptionally bright spots of color in Susan's cheeks that did not entirely disappear all through the evening that followed, for whenever the two young people directly addressed each other, these two spots of vivid color were immediately accentuated.

The widow's sharp eyes quickly discerned the state of affairs, and taking advantage of the position in which the young couple had placed themselves, she mercilessly and evidently with malice aforethought said:

"It seems to me Susan, that you must have some fever. I think that when you go to bed tonight you'd better drink a good, big cup of hot, bone-set tea."

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHEN EARLY the next morning the young American officer rode away from Evergreen Hill, his heart was torn by conflicting emotions; he carried with him the memory of a white-faced girl, who, with shining eyes and a restrained and mournful manner, had suddenly appeared at the turn in the driveway just as he was leaving, and giving him her right hand cordially, yet distantly, had with her left one, gently patted Roan's smooth glossy neck while she murmured a few formal, yet evidently earnest words of farewell. At the same time, there was preserved with tender care, where he could at any moment look upon it, a very different and a very vital picture, a living, breathing drama in which this same young woman was one of the chief actors, and in which he himself also had a leading part; the picture that has just been mentioned haunted him, and brought to him profound regret, and yet in spite of all that he could do, he found that he would very often go

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over all the circumstances that had been connected with it, beginning when he had drawn near to Susan, and at the same time to her sister's irreparable soul-searing loss, passing lightly over the space that intervened between the two, who, as if with prearranged precision, took their places quietly, and the door, that although they both endeavored strenuously to open it, remained stubbornly and blindly closed, and ending in a rush of unpremeditated unexpected feeling, that was so wild and so ecstatic, that each time he recalled it, it not only as it were, swept him off his feet, but covered up, and in fact obliterated at least for the time being, everything that had ever gone before it. As he journeyed along the corduroy road, the episode of the closed door repeated itself to him in a sort of rhythmic dreamy chant; finally, he leaned forward and patting the neck of his gallant charger, said:

“She is as sweet, Roan, as she is beautiful, and she is as beautiful either when her face is animated, or when it is in repose as anyone possessed of flesh and blood could ever be. Her lips, Roan,” he paused, but his auditor with stolid sympathy did not cease to listen,” her

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lips are as soft as the petals of a rose that is just about to bloom, and they are alive, Roan, they are decidedly and delicately alive. What are we going to do about it, Roan," he ended anxiously, "what *are* we going to do about it?" and then as if he had received an answer that was final he added, "I expect that's what we'll have to do, old Fellow, I presume that you are right about it and we will have to stay away, although we both delight to go there."

After having settled, or at least after having tried to settle this vexed question, the two companions did not for some little time engage again in conversation; the creaking of the saddle-leather, and the regular trampling of the horse's strong and steady feet striking against the logs that formed the foundation of the corduroy road, combined with the clanking of metal parts of the bridle and martingale, as the restless charger tossed his head, or champed the bits that were in his mouth, were the only sounds that for some little time were heard by the two, who were not unaccustomed to being alone, except for each other in the midst of primeval surroundings; at length, however, it was evident that Roan's attention was attracted

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to something that was transpiring, or that was about to transpire in the immediate vicinity, for he arched his neck, drawing his nose back until his underlip almost touched his breast and rolling his eyes so that the whites of them were plainly visible, he pranced along gingerly, casting anxious and inquiring glances, first upon one side of the road, and then upon the other; his rider became at once alert and watchful, joining his own instinctive precautionary powers to those of his equine friend; suddenly, a sound arose that was like nothing, or so at least it seemed to them at first, that either horse or rider had ever heard before; the direction from which the sound came was as mysterious as the thing itself had been; it was neither on the right nor on the left of the road, it was neither before them, nor behind them; it did not seem to come from the branches of the trees the tops of which were towering far above them, and yet the weird and penetrating sound was all around them; it seemed to permeate the silence and to filter through the atmosphere, and to spread itself above and over every other sound, so that nothing else was heard; and yet, as evidenced by every other sense save that of

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hearing only the man and horse were utterly alone; as they proceeded, the sound also advanced, and when they stopped, hoping thereby to penetrate the mystery, it also stopped. This was a new experience for the young officer, and he resolved at once to investigate it thoroughly. As it was broad daylight, he did not really fear an ambushade, and yet he felt that serious danger was not very far away, if for no other reason than from the fact that Roan, instead of standing still, kept pawing nervously upon whatever was beneath his feet, and also, when his dumb companion twisted his head around so that he could look at him, according to a habit that he'd formed because they had been often in close quarters, he noticed that his nostrils were distended and quivering, as if he had been making some unusual exertion, instead of moving along quietly as was his daily custom. Thinking that perhaps the intelligence of his mount might materially assist his own discernment, as it had often done before, the young man pressed both knees closely against the horse's sides, thus enlisting his undivided and his most profound attention; then he allowed the reins to hang loosely on his neck, giving him the

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privilege of turning his head freely. After that he waited quietly, and very soon he found that the method he had employed was efficacious, for suddenly Roan began to snuff, as if he thought that he smelled some strange odor, and then he moved his head nervously but cautiously, as if he were trying to find the trail of the scent that he had noticed. At last it seemed that he had found it, for he began to move slowly and softly, keeping his nose straight out in front of him, or lowered until it almost touched the ground, and carrying the weight of his own body, as well as that of his rider so lightly that he almost seemed to creep; after a while he left the road, and began to wind in and out carefully among the bushes and undergrowth that lined it on both sides, until at last he came to a pile of dried leaves that had been heaped up in such a manner that, as it seemed, they must have been placed there by human hands. Without waiting for orders from the young man who, as he knew well, was in full sympathy with him, the intelligent animal began to paw, first with one of his front feet, and then with the other one, at the dried leaves, and at the same time, to poke at them with his nose; his rider however was

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not inactive, but having dismounted, was ably assisting in the work that, as it appeared, Roan had decided that they should do. In a very short space of time the heap of leaves was entirely removed, and yawningly a great black hole stared, or seemed to stare up into the faces of the two investigators; they stepped back quickly and involuntarily, for they both naturally feared that the ground might begin to crumble underneath their feet, and as they made this move, there issued from the hole that they had uncovered, the head and shoulders of a man, and in his hands, he held the object from which evidently had proceeded the strange and mystifying sound that had so startled and surprised them; crawling out and going over so that he stood beside the other man, the newcomer who had just been as it were unearthed exclaimed:

“These underground signal-stations get terribly dull, Sir,” respectfully acknowledging the young officer’s rank, “during the long days when there is nothing much to do, and as I used to play the pipes in Scotland, and brought my bagpipe with me when I came across, I

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thought I'd do some practicing to while away the time. And I don't believe" he ended directly addressing Roan, "that anyone but you would have discovered me!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BEGINNING of the year 1779 had opened darkly for American hopes and American ambitions, and when early in May, Mr. Marclay again visited Evergreen Hill, the outlook for the fortunes of the young republic that was making such a gallant struggle for its own independence, was far from rosy; many preparations had been made as usual for the entertainment of the distinguished guest, and he, as usual, accepted the results of the time and energy that had been expended in his behalf, as if they were only what he had a right to expect. Indeed it could be seen that he had grown very weary of his prolonged stay in the land that still refused to obey the one he chose to consider as its rightful sovereign. One evening when closeted in private converse, according to his custom with Mr. Ward, after having expressed some of his views, rather forcefully he said:

“Affairs will be brought to a crisis now very soon; preparations are now being made for certain movements that will completely overthrow

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our king's rebellious subjects; some of these movements" he went on looking fixedly, almost sternly at his host, who returned his gaze with an expression of countenance that was closely akin to fear, "will take place at no great distance from your home, and we shall expect," he ended haughtily, "that you will do all that is within your power to further them."

"As you know," began Mr. Ward deprecatingly, "I have always been loyal and in a few instances I have been able to be of some slight service to the cause that you so ably represent. The position that I occupy here upon the neutral ground, is as you know, a precarious and a dangerous one. I am surrounded" he went on lowering the tone of his voice and looking fearfully about the room that was occupied as far as could be seen by them alone, "by those who would willingly, even perhaps gladly, if my real views concerning this frightful disturbance were distinctly understood, not only take away from me my home and all that I possess of worldly goods, but it might well be," he ended shudderingly, "that my life as well as the lives of those who are dependent upon me might be sacrificed."

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Well," declared the visitor, rising and pacing back and forth across the room, "we are all risking our lives as well as our property. Many noble and worthily aspiring personalities have already been snuffed out in the mad whirl of this senseless uprising! How many more will follow them before the end is reached no man can know! One thing is certain though," he ended so fiercely and vindictively that his listener's face became almost livid beneath the whip-lash of his words, "treason in every shape and cowardice in every form must be done away with! The instigators of every plot that has in its inception the idea of detriment to the rightful rulers of this country, should be properly and summarily punished!" and then as if he felt that the words that he had used, had after all, not been severe enough he added, "I for one would be willing to risk my life and all that I hold dear upon this mundane sphere many times over in order to bring the guilty to the bar of judgment!"

"You must remember," the other said appealingly, "that my situation is quite different in many ways than your own. Those whom you love," he hesitated, but as his case seemed

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to be growing rather desperate, went bravely on, "are far removed from all this turmoil in the midst of which my daughters must remain unless," he ended bowing his head upon his clasped hands and looking down disconsolately, "you can suggest some way by means of which I can remove them from this vicinity, and yet continue to perform as far as I am able the work that in my feeble way I have been trying to do."

His visitor regarded him for some little time seriously and even with some appearance of commiseration and finally he said:

"I think that I understand your situation perfectly, and not only I," he went, stopping in front of his host, and looking earnestly down at him, "but those whom I have the honor to represent also understand it. We know," eyeing the other man squarely, for he, startled by the emphatic tone of the speaker, had looked up, "that you are both figuratively and literally upon neutral ground. We know, that although you frequently profess to us your devotion to the cause to which we ourselves are loyal, you secretly rejoice because both of your daughters have openly declared their fealty to the

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makeshift government that has recently been set up here. Thus you hope," he went on disgustedly, "that which ever side is victorious in this unnatural and most annoying struggle you and yours may be unharmed. You have as we believe," he ended standing beside the table that occupied the centre of the room, and resting the tips of fingers of one hand upon it, "no positive convictions or fixed beliefs or even," as if he did not wish to fail in making his meaning plain, "strong opinions concerning the matter that we are now discussing. We think that you," he ended looking down at Mr. Ward as if from a great height, "will serve your king unless the armies of your king should be defeated, of which catastrophe there is even yet a bare possibility, and in that case, we think that you would have no hesitancy in declaring yourself to be in favor of the enemies of your king."

"I do not know," said the owner of Evergreen Hill, rising and facing his guest with a poise and dignity of manner that often comes to timid creatures when they are at last at bay, "why you are bringing these charges against me at this time. I have no idea of the object that you may have in taking the stand that you

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have just taken. If it is to let me know that you no longer desire my assistance in the work that you yourself are doing, I beg that you will be perfectly frank and apprise me of the fact at once so that I may govern myself accordingly." As the other man did not at once reply to this appeal, he, wishing to bring the affair to some sort of definite conclusion added, "I wish to know exactly what will be expected of me hereafter."

Somewhat non-plussed by the attitude that had been taken by one who had hitherto rather cringingly accepted the position of an acknowledged inferior, Mr. Marclay did not immediately take up the conversational gauntlet that the other had thrown down. Instead he, a little absent-mindedly, started toward the outer door as if about to leave the room, but as if he had thought the matter over, he stopped just before he had reached the door and turning his face again toward his host announced:

"I shall be leaving here at once. Please make arrangements for my immediate departure. As to what you have just said," the tones of his voice were cold and distant, "concerning what will be expected of you in the future all

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that will have been definitely determined within the space of a few weeks from this date. I wish to have you distinctly understand," he ended, throwing back his shoulders, and drawing himself up to his full height, so that he towered commandingly above the one whom he addressed, "that from the time your door is closed behind me tonight, you and I are strangers."

CHAPTER XXXV

HAD THE family at Evergreen Hill heard Mr. Marclay's statement with regard to certain military movements that would soon take place at no great distance from their home, they would have been forcibly reminded of it, when in the latter part of the same month in which the distinguished guest had visited Mr. Ward for the last time, General Clinton with an armament sailed up the Hudson river to Stony Point. This fort was a point of great strategic importance, as it commanded the entrance to both the eastern and middle States, and when its garrison unable to resist the attacking British forces escaped from the fortifications, thus leaving them in the hands of the enemy, their abandonment of this important military post resulted in a great loss to the American army. The news of the surrender of Stony Point spread like wildfire in the immediate vicinity, and when on the first day of June the British bombarded Verplanck's Point on the opposite side of the river, Susan and

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Mary Ward looked into each other's eyes doubtfully and fearfully, and clung to each other wondering and terror-stricken. That night they slept in each other's arms, and whenever a sudden gust of wind shook the shutters, or an unusually long branch of one of the evergreen trees that grew near to the house brushed against the side of it, they trembled, and crept a little nearer each to the other. Fear that her lover had given his life in vain, and that the cause for which he lost it if not already lost, bade fair ere long to be so, brought an added horror to the bitter sorrow that dwelt in Mary's loving heart, and Susan mourned, although only when alone, and secretly over the thought that one, to whom she'd freely given her chaste, warm, virgin love might never taste the fruits of the victory that he had tried so hard to win, and both of them regretted deeply for their well-beloved country's sake, any loss that she might sustain for they were both earnestly and lovingly patriotic. Having grown up as they had with the wilderness all about them, they had learned to recognize true worth, and to know the value of intrinsic right. There was in their delicate bodies, the endur-

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ance of the pioneer woman, combined with the grace and beauty of the trained and cultured lady; they held in their gentle hearts the courage to live up to their convictions, and the ability to bestow an adoring and a steadfast affection upon another human being. The two girls were, in short, fit representatives of those strong, refined, true-hearted women, who fighting side by side with our forefathers, helped to hew out the foundations, and to fashion the substantial, yet beautiful furnishings of that brave edifice, that is today, our place of abode, where happy homes and fertile fields are constantly multiplied in *that one fair land, whose single boast has always been that it was free.*

But while the two daughters of Mr. Ward faced the facts that were weighing their spirits down, tremblingly it is true, and yet heroically, there were those who made their home at Evergreen Hill, upon whom, the near-by attack of the British forces had quite a different effect. Uncle Obediah and Aunt Dolly had entered into a slight altercation with each other some little time before the actual beginning of the bombardment; he had insisted that old Dexter

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was in every way the peer of Roan, the gallant charger of the young American officer, with whom they had both become acquainted, because he with his rider had frequently visited the estate of Mr. Ward; and in supporting his positive statements he said:

“He am de dependablist hoss in dis worl’ Niggah! Anyting dat he am axed ter do he’ll do ef he breks a hame-string! Dis hoss dat yo seem ter admiah nebber done a good hard day’s wuk in all his amblin’ prancin’ life. He *looks* all right” he went on getting more and more excited, “but what *am* he? Dat’s what I axes yo” he ended furiously, “*What am he?*”

“I can tell yo what he am ef yo wants ter know!” exclaimed Aunt Dolly entering fiercely into the fray, “I can trow de light ob understandibleness on de darkness ob yo min’ en I can mek you see onless yo is stun-blin’ dat I am right! Dis hoss dat yo am stickin’ up for” shaking a dusky determined finger before her antagonist’s face so that she just avoided hitting him on the nose, “am not fitten ter eben follow in de *tracks* ob dis yer Roan! He am de quality, dat hoss am! He am as proud as *Lucifer* en he hab good reason to *be* proud!

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Dere am not a hoss in all dis lan' '' working herself up almost into a frenzied condition and emphasizing her words by throwing out her capable hands right and left so that her opponent began to duck and dodge, "dat am carryin' along wid him a more upstandin' en han'som en enticin' ossifer dan what *he* am! He am de fines' en de highes'-headed hoss dat evah in dis libin' worl' come bowin' en scrapin en dancin' up ter dis yer doah! Dat's what he am Niggah, en doan yo evah fail to recommemorate dat I done *tol'* yo so!"

Having led up to this startling and all-embracing conclusion, which, as it seemed to her, covered the ground completely, the old negress glared belligerently and triumphantly at the one who had dared to question the clarity and reasonableness of her opinion. Uncle 'Diah hesitated, for he had learned from experience, that it was not always best to rouse his partner's ire to the highest pitch of which it was capable, and yet he had made it a practice during his rather stormy married life to, as far as possible, have the last word in any argument into which his spouse and himself had entered. In view of this long-cherished and as it seemed

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to him highly commendatory habit he once more advanced toward his foe:

“Yo haid am too big Niggah, yo haid am too big!” he yelled as if he hoped that noise alone would win the day for him, “De brains dat am inside you haid am wabulatin’ roun’ en roun’ untwell dey caint ketch up wid one anudder! Niggah,” he went on speaking in a lowered kindly even a benevolent tone of voice, “yo am in dangah! Brains dat wabulate dat-away onless dey am cauterfied” drifting away entirely from the consideration of the objects concerning which the argument had started, “go roun’ en roun’ untwell dey go so fas’ dat dey lose all deir sense. . .”

But Aunt Dolly had borne as much of this contumely as she felt she could patiently endure, and as she also had ceased to dwell upon the respective merits of the two equally estimable but very different horses, she stepped a little near to the other negro, and resting her arms akimbo upon her ample hips, while she drew up her squatty figure so that it was as straight as she could make it, declared:

“De sense dat am loss aroun’ yer am not out ob de brains dat am in my haid!” Uncle ’Diah

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started to leave the room then and seeing that she had the enemy as it were on the run the speaker closed in on him at once by placing a firm hand upon his arm and demanding, "Whah yo gwine?"

"I'se agwine whah I'se *agwine!*" his tone was surly and insultingly final, "*Dat's* whah I'se *agwine!*"

And it was just at that crucial and most unfortunate instant that the British bombardment of Verplanck's Point began.

Both darkies fell upon their knees and groveled back and forth across the floor; Aunt Dolly was the first to raise her quavering voice in prayer and as she mumbled incoherent but beseeching supplications Uncle 'Diah fervently and humbly cried:

"Amen!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

DISASTER sometimes solves for human beings, problems, the complexity of which, prosperity and peace might never untangle; decisions, that have long been held in abeyance through motives of diplomacy and policy, are sometimes definitely made under sudden severe stress. And so it happened that Mr. Ward, after years that had been spent in dilly-dallying subterfuge, and as it had appeared in the final outcome, futile hypocrisy, in the face of dire danger, and in support of what seemed to him to be a desperate and an almost despairing cause, turned his back upon the unavailing past, looked bravely toward the future, and joined his strength openly to that of his daughters, declaring his fealty to the young republic that at that time, was suffering serious reverses in the bitter struggle that was then being carried on for independence. This change in the professed attitude of the owner of Evergreen Hill, left the widow of Mr. Ward's brother alone among all of those who made

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their home upon the estate, in her pronounced loyalty to the royal side of the bloody controversy, that was then being waged all around them.

When she fully realized that this was the case, she determined pluckily to make one more effort, tending toward the accomplishment of the object that she had had in view for many years. In accordance with this determination, she, one afternoon in the latter part of June, after having noticed her brother-in-law enter the evergreen arbor, that was located at some little distance from the house, sauntered slowly, and with apparent carelessness down the broad stone walk and over to the arbor. Glancing in at the entrance, she uttered a surprised exclamation as if she had not expected to find anyone there; then entering the arbor, although without an invitation from its occupant, she seated herself comfortably and remarked:

“It seems to me that it would be a good idea for us to leave here, at least for a time, now that you have placed yourself upon the side of the revolutionists.” As her auditor made no remark, she went on in explication of what she had just said. “This property will, naturally,

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as soon as the royal forces are actually in control of the entire surroundings, be occupied and overrun, even if it is not confiscated, and of course there will then be no room for you and your family here. It is possible" she compromised, "that some arrangements might be made later on, so that we could return. Of course" she ended generously, "I would do all that would be within my power to bring about such a result although" she added as if from an afterthought, "my efforts toward that end would, at present, be handicapped somewhat by the relationship that I sustain with reference to you and the girls. That matter could however," looking directly and pointedly at the one whom she addressed, "be very quickly adjusted."

"If for any reason you desire to leave my home Catharine," Mr. Ward's tone was calm, even to placidity, "you know that you are at perfect liberty to do so. I would not restrain or hamper you in any way, but on the other hand, I would assist you in making whatever preparations you would consider to be necessary. I am sure," he went on almost eagerly, "that my daughters would be glad to help you in carrying

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out whatever plans you would formulate in making arrangements for your departure. I think," he ended rising as if he were about to leave the arbor, "that you would better see them concerning this matter at once."

But the widow had determined to bring what was on her mind to a crisis, and was not willing to relinquish easily the object that had led her to corner her brother-in-law at this particular time; and so she stepped between him and the exit from the arbor, thus effectually preventing his escape, and without any preliminary preparations, bluntly asked:

"Do you think that you will ever marry again?"

He did not hesitate this time as he had always done before, when she had brought him as it were to bay but deliberately and determinedly looking directly at her and speaking in a decided tone of voice replied:

"I am sure that I do not wish to marry at the present time, and for that matter, I do not suppose that I will ever do so. I expect to spend the balance of my life" he went on as if he wished to temper the harshness of the words that, as it had seemed to him, he had been

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obliged to use, "whether the time that I am to spend here on the earth be long or short, in looking after the interests and in enjoying the companionship of my two daughters, from whom to some extent, I have been in a certain degree estranged on account of the apparent difference in our opinions concerning public affairs, which difference," he ended as if the statement brought him great relief, "no longer either seemingly or really exists."

The widow had been watching him keenly and appraisingly, and saw that he had really meant what he had just been saying; like many another who has fought long and hard in a losing game, she recognized the fact that she was defeated, and decided to accept the result as gracefully as possible; hence, not without compunctions, indeed with the display of a good deal of innate grit, she announced:

"I presume that your happily united little family will get along better after this without, than with me, especially as the girls according to their own ideas, no longer needed my services as chaperon. And so" she ended briskly and with a businesslike and bustling manner, "I will at once pack my personal belongings,

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and relieve you of my presence which," she added for it was not in her nature to forego the pleasure of delivering a final vicious stab, "as representing established law and order, must be rather oppressive to those who desire to break away from, and overthrow their rightful rulers."

They emerged from the arbor then, for after the pronounced stand that his sister-in-law had taken, it did not seem to Mr. Ward that there was anything more for him to do or say, at least at that time. As they came out upon the walk that led to the front door of the residence, they saw a well-known horse, bearing upon his back a well-known rider, turning in from the public highway toward the driveway, and passing between the two huge stone pillars that guarded the entrance to it; the sight was too much for the widow's equanimity, and her new-found dignity, born of the righteousness of purpose which she had announced she was in solitary state enjoying, dissolved and disappeared as if it had been a garment newly donned that had been, as it had been found to poorly fit the one who tried to wear it, quickly laid aside; her countenance assumed an expression of injured

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innocence, and the tones of her voice were full of scorn and almost loathing as she exclaimed:

“They will have everything their own way after I am gone! I think, judging from the past,” turning toward her brother-in-law and fixing her fiery vituperative glance upon him, “that you will have every reason to be proud of your elder daughter and her intimate associates! When that fellow there” looking vindictively and hatefully at the young American officer as Roan paced proudly and slowly up the driveway, “gets his just deserts, there won’t be any more of his philandering and flirting going on around here! As far as I am concerned” she ended as if she wished to clear her own skirts, as the old saying goes, completely, “you may all take the consequences of your own rebellious insane deeds! As for *you*” she added with a final thrust at the one who was nearest to her and toward whom she personally felt the most animosity, “you have always been a coward, and now to cap the climax, just when it would be most to your interest and that of your family to stick to the principles that you have heretofore professed to uphold, you are a turn-coat!”

CHAPTER XXXVII

DURING the night that followed the fifteenth day of July 1779, there was undertaken and carried to a successful conclusion one of the most hazardous, thrilling and spectacular military enterprises that was ever even dreamed of by the mind of man. The capture and occupation by the British of the fort at Stony Point on the Hudson River, was looked upon by Washington and his officers as one of the most severe blows that had fallen on the patriotic cause during the entire revolutionary war. It was very much desired that this important post should be retaken, and the possibility of regaining Stony Point was frequently and earnestly discussed by those to whom the conduct of the affairs of the young republic of the United States of America had been entrusted. At length it was decided that General Anthony Wayne then in command of the light infantry of the revolutionary army should, using his own discretion, and employing whatever means and tactics he should deem to be

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necessary, attempt to place the strategic advantage of this nearly inaccessible fort again at the disposal of the patriots. With intrepid daring and cheerful alacrity, this well-beloved and much-admired American hero, at the head of a small but carefully selected body of devoted volunteers, marched from Sandy Beach fourteen miles away, over a rough stone-strewn and broken road during the afternoon of July fifteenth, arriving in the immediate vicinity of Stony Point in the evening of that day.

The fact that this arrival was safely accomplished without the knowledge of the enemy, was due to various causes, but chiefly to the preparations that were made by sympathetic accomplices for the unhindered passage of the patriotic troops. On the evening of the preceding day, had Uncle Obediah been warily stationed as he had been upon a previous occasion, beneath the pine tree in the front yard at Evergreen Hill, he might have seen hovering around the house with many windows, and going in and out of the evergreen arbor, not only the painted and be-feathered so-called Savage whom he had seen there once before, but also a goodly number of other friendly Indians, who,

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wearing war-bonnets and with their bodies as well as their faces hideously streaked and colored, under the leadership of Storm Cloud had been deputized as scouts to clear the way before General Wayne and his gallant followers, for Mr. Ward had entered heart and soul into the struggle for freedom and equality and gladly made his estate a rendezvous for all of those who were in sympathy with it. But Uncle 'Diah himself was otherwise engaged upon the eventful evening; as soon as he had closed the blinds and cellar-doors as usual at sunset on that day, the old darkey had quietly and unostentatiously, after having bade his dusky spouse a tearful and an affectionate farewell, betaken himself into the woods; he had carried with him either as weapons or as implements with the use of which he was especially familiar, a pitchfork and a spade; with these two trusty companions, and a knapsack in which had been placed a quantity of substantial nourishing food, he spent that night, the following day, and a greater part of the succeeding night away from home. Aunt Dolly would have been wild with anxiety concerning the one whom she loved the best, and with whom at the same

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time she found the most fault, but for the fact that she also had a part to play in the silent, stirring drama that was being staged near to her. The old negress, as soon as it was dark, went to a certain window, the blind of which had been left partly open in the big house, and lighting a tallow candle placed it so that its lustre would shine through one of the many panes of glass that were set in the window-frame; this candle she industriously and steadfastly snuffed and tended, keeping its flame as bright as possible, until it had burned down almost to the candle-stick, when she replaced it with another one that she had previously lighted. All that night, in spite of weariness, and an almost overpowering desire to go to sleep, she stuck to her post, and repeated the process during the most of the following night. Mr. Ward was busily engaged in attending to certain affairs, for the management of which he was especially well fitted on account of the experience he had had with the methods that were customarily employed by those to whom he was then in every way opposed. The duties that he had imposed upon himself, required the use of many different colored torches or primitive

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rockets, and it was necessary in order to satisfactorily accomplish the work that he had set himself to do, to secure and properly combine many different kinds of chemicals; these were difficult to obtain and having been obtained, hard to handle without certain supposedly essential retorts, and a complicated and peculiar heating apparatus. However as he was determined to render what aid he could to the cause that he had so heartily, even if only recently espoused, he found ways and means whereby he could, through his own inventive ability, bring about results that astonished even himself, so that he was able to remove from the vicinity of Stony Point many who might otherwise have interfered with the approach of those who were preparing to attack that fort. Mary and Susan Ward in the midst of all the activity that was going on in and around their home, were not idle. Indeed there was no one who was connected even remotely with the estate of their father, who was more deeply concerned than they were, as to the result of the seemingly almost hopeless venture that was to be made only a few miles away from them; the two girls had been for several weeks preparing packages

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of lint that they had patiently and laboriously scraped from linen, that their own hands and those of the other women of the family had manufactured by spinning, carding and weaving the skin of the flax that had been grown and hatched upon their own estate. They had also made many rolls of long strips of cloth to be used as bandages, and while performing this humanitarian work, they shuddered, and often looked at each other with eyes that were dimmed by tears of apprehensive pity. After their Uncle's widow had gone away, the two girls were together even more than they had been while the older woman had assumed the position of mentor and general household manager in their home; one day, after Mary had been out of the room where they usually sat together, she returned to it suddenly, and caused her sister to blush furiously by closely observing a monogram composed of the initials C and M that Susan had been beautifully embroidering upon the outside of what is known as a housewife, designed to contain needles, threads and pins handily arranged for a man's use. On the fifteenth day of July, however, both of the daughters of Mr. Ward turned their

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attention to what, as they hoped, would alleviate at least to some extent, the suffering that, as they feared, would follow the night-attack that, as they had been told, would soon take place. As the day wore on their anxiety was greatly increased, and when early in the evening their father informed them that those who were intending to storm the fort, had reached the positions that they had hoped to occupy beside it, they were very much excited and Susan, looking at the two others, earnestly exclaimed:

“We must get these supplies to them at once!” looking around her at the rolls of bandages and packages of lint that had been so carefully prepared, “they may be needed within a few hours now!” Then seeing the look of consternation amounting almost to dismay that was growing upon her father’s face, she added, “I will take them myself! I am young and strong and I know the way! I will go at once!”

Then embracing the two of whom she was so fond, and directing Mary to make a bundle of the rolls and bandages, the girl left the house, returning to the door within a very short space of time, mounted upon the strongest, swiftest

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horse that she could find about the place; having secured the bundle, with a hasty farewell she rode away, and her sister's tears flowed freely as she watched her go.

And meanwhile, the little band of daring and devoted patriots who were waiting there near Stony Point to do and dare, and many of them die, were unloading their muskets and fixing their bayonets and silently, cautiously, preparing to enter into a desperate and a most unequal combat.

The fort was surrounded upon all sides by natural protections. There were British war-vessels in the river before it, the fort itself was provided with heavy ordnance as well as lighter weapons, and it was occupied by more than twice as many men as were then planning to storm it.

On one side of Stony Point, there was a little strip of sandy beach that was passable only at low tide, and then but for a short time; over this little bit of beach, from which the water had just receded, a man with light accoutrements might cross, but the sand would not bear up the weight of a horse even without his rider; at twenty minutes after twelve, upon that horror-

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laden epoch-making night, General Anthony Wayne and his heroic followers filed along the path that the retreating river had left for them, and with undaunted courage, in the face of a deadly fire from the guns of the British who were within the fort, as well as from the vessels that were stationed below it, after having caught, and gagged the pickets of the enemy, climbed up the steep and towering hill, and over the high stone walls of the fortifications themselves, and without having discharged a single shot, captured or killed the entire garrison. The gallant leader of the storming party received a blow upon the head that temporarily stunned him, so that he fell to the ground, but in spite of that fact he entered the fort at the head of his men.

Shortly after the performance of a feat that was so spectacular and unheard of that it has gone down in history as one of the most brilliant deeds that has ever been known to military annals, the instigator and hero of it, borne upon the shoulders of some of the admiring enthusiasts whom he so signally had led to victory, was being carried noisily, with many stops and interruptions, across the difficult and uncertain

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footing of the marsh that protected upon one side the approach to the fort that had just been retaken. Sympathizing with, and to some extent sharing, the almost insane elation that was the natural result of the relaxation of nerves that had been strained by long and steady tension, the gallant leader, who, with Yankee ingenuity and fervent, almost prayerful purpose, had marked another milestone in the advance toward the independence of the United States of America, saw in the dim light a little group that instantly attracted his attention.

As he, still in the proud position where his men had placed him, came up to this group, he distinctly and startlingly heard a girl's sweet low voice saying:

"Where is he, Roan? Is he hurt? Oh, Roan . . ." the voice was scarcely audible then, for the speaker had buried her face in the heavy mane of the horse, but at least one of those who was near to her heard the words that followed, "I love him so . . . *can't* you help me to find him?"

"Here's your horse, General!" gleefully called out one of the men, "Here's old Roan waiting for you!"

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Susan looked up, and with quick and terrible intuition, understood the situation at once. Silently, in fact before she had been discovered by more than a very few of the excited soldiers, she slipped away in the darkness, found her own horse, tremblingly climbed upon his back, laid the reins loosely upon his neck, and with bowed head and broken heart, started toward the corduroy road immediately after the storming of Stony Point.







